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Sharm al-Shaykh Peacemakers Summit

Peacemakers Summit: Regional Countries Set Up 'Secret' Counterterror Mechanism

TA1403134196 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 14 Mar 96 p A2

[Report by Gay Bekhor, special correspondent to the Sharm al-Shaykh conference]

[FBIS Translated Text] Senior members of the intelligence and security apparatuses of Israel and of a number of Arab states held secret talks — the first of their kind — on 12 and 13 March in several bungalows at Sharm al-Shaykh's Movenpick Hotel. The heads of the apparatuses, who arrived for that specific purpose, discussed possible formats for cooperation against terror.

The talks provided the senior officials with an opportunity to get to know one another and to begin to review ways of trailing the transfer of funds through various bank accounts used by terrorist organizations.

The Arab participants included the heads of the Egyptian espionage apparatuses and security service, the heads of similar Jordanian apparatuses, intelligence parties from other countries, and senior CIS staffers.

Israeli-Jordanian intelligence ties are excellent, and lately there has been a marked improvement in Israeli-Egyptian intelligence ties. A knowledgeable source told HA'ARETZ that the talks were not held around one table but rather ongoing bilateral and multilateral meetings and discussions were held by members of services from various countries, including Arab ones. The source added that the parties attending the meetings did not address specifics but rather focused on ideas for future cooperation mechanisms. The discussion on drying up the terror financing through bank accounts, however, was one of the most operational issues on the agenda of the meetings. The parties looked into Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir 'Arafat's allegation that Hamas' [Islamic Resistance Movement] funding comes from Jordan through bank accounts, a charge which the relevant Jordanian officials take most seriously. The bank account issue is very complex, as it requires intelligence data as well as legal options. The Americans have undertaken to set up a permanent secret coordination mechanism, and the contacts between the secret services is expected to assume an established format within the next two weeks. Within a month, the mechanism is expected to provide the first recommendations on discreet action against terror, and it will apparently continue to operate among the various countries in the region in the future.

The establishment of this new secret counterterror mechanism involving countries in the region was one of the primary achievements of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference.

Peacemakers Summit: King Hassan Sees 'Balanced, Harmonious' Results of Summit

MM1503111896 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 15 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Interview with King Hassan II of Morocco by Sawsan Abu-Husayn in Sharm al-Shaykh; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Abu-Husayn] King Hassan II chose for his speech at the summit the title "peacemaking." Why?

[Hassan] First of all I fully agree with the conference's name, "Summit of the Peacemakers" — a phrase which matches current international and Arab conditions. Yes, peacemaking necessitates that all, that is, the peacemakers, safeguard their workmanship, otherwise their efforts would be in vain. This is what I wanted to draw attention to. By nature I am always optimistic, because pessimism in politics means closing all doors and heading toward the unknown.

[Abu-Husayn] How would you assess the outcome of the conference?

[Hassan] Without doubt it has achieved results that can be described as balanced and harmonious for all parties, because there are no gains and losses in politics...the two coexist. The important thing is to establish peace in the Middle East and hence achieve security and stability for all.

[Abu-Husayn] You met with U.S. President Bill Clinton. Did you reach an agreement on specific issues concerning the peace process?

[Hassan] My meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton dealt with an assessment of the resolutions adopted by the conference. He agreed with me that there was balance and harmony. And we broached the work to implement what was agreed in the conference. As for relations with the United States, they are always good, praise be to God. We consult with one another whenever there is an opportunity to meet and consult. The important thing — as unanimously agreed by world leaders — is to work at bilateral, regional, and international levels to reinforce stability in the region, prevent the enemies of peace from achieving their aim, and halt terrorist actions. That would reinforce the peace process for the sake of achieving a comprehensive settlement.

[Abu-Husayn] Do you believe that the time has come to establish full and collective Arab coordination in order to accelerate the peace steps?

[Hassan] Each Arab state has its own working methods. There are political tunes which each state plays in its own way when dealing with the region's issues. But the time has come to agree on firm principles and constants. Although this form of Arab action is already in existence, we still need a stronger agreement.

[Abu-Husayn] You have in the past called for the development of the Arab League. What is your position now?

[Hassan] When the Arab League decides to seriously call for a revision of the charter, we will be the first to come to the League to develop and reactivate its role.

[Abu-Husayn] Do you have a specific proposal in this connection?

[Hassan] When that is decided, I will have numerous proposals, not just one.

[Abu-Husayn] What about relations between Saudi Arabia and Morocco?

[Hassan] They are excellent. Our ties with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are very strong, and there is permanent coordination and consultation between me and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz.

Peacemakers Summit: Omani Minister Stresses Cooperation To Combat Terrorism

JN1503102096 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0749 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Muscat, 15 Mar (WAKH) — The Sultanate of Oman asserted that it will continue its efforts and cooperation with others for the sake of the current peace process. It also said that it will join the international community in urging all opponents of the peace process to abandon terrorism and engage in the legitimate process of political debate and peaceful dialogue.

In a statement following his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres in Sharm al-Shaykh on 13 March, Yusuf Bin-'Alawi Bin-'Abdallah, Omani minister of state for foreign affairs, said that Oman supports the Palestinian National Authority's efforts to combat terrorism on its land. He said that Oman emphasizes its preparedness to cooperate with all parties to the peace process within the framework of a constructive and practical drive to combat and deter terrorism. The statement was carried by the OMANI NEWS AGENCY today.

The minister of state for foreign affairs said: Four years after the convening of the historic Madrid peace conference, many achievements have been made, thanks to the bold steps taken to realize the conference's objective of bringing about a just, comprehensive, and permanent peace in the Middle East.

He added that some have paid with their life for peace. He said the assassination of former Israeli prime minister Yitzhaq Rabin sought to destroy reconciliation and the achievements of the peace process over four years. He added that this attempt failed, noting that in the recent weeks advocates of violence tried once again to destroy the achievements of the peace process. Yusuf Bin-'Alawi Bin-'Abdallah reiterated Oman's absolute condemnation of the recent terrorist actions in Israel.

Answering a question on his meeting with the Israeli prime minister, he said that the meeting focused on the future and developments in the peace process and on upgrading bilateral cooperation between the two countries. He added: We support the positive efforts exerted by Peres in this regard. We are confident about the future of peace in the region.

Peacemakers Summit: Qatari Foreign Minister on Terrorism, Relations With Israel

JN1403152196 Doha Radio Qatar in Arabic 1030 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Hamad Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani stressed that Qatar rejects linking terrorism with Islam.

In statements to journalists after the international summit of peacemakers yesterday, his excellency said: Terrorism exists with the Jews, with us, and with any other party. Therefore, we say terrorism, but do not mention any religion, because religions advocate peace and respect for human beings and prohibit killing. This is why we cannot link it with Islam. It is not part of Islam.

He added that the peacemakers summit was a good opportunity to make the world and the people understand that the leaders want to achieve peace and stability and renounce violence and terrorism in the region. Anyone can express his opinion through peaceful means.

Responding to a question about whether the recent developments in Qatar could be linked to terrorism, which is being discussed today, Shaykh Hamad-Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani said: I believe the developments are linked with this issue. However, the issue has other aspects.

On whether what has taken place in Qatar was discussed at the summit, his excellency said: We did not discuss this issue this time. We came to discuss a specific issue. However, what has taken place can be classified as an act of terrorism. This is why we always reject terrorism.

Answering another question on whether Qatar supports a strike against the Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement following the recent operations, his excellency said: We support striking against terrorism, without mentioning any side. This is because there are several sides, and all Hamas members are not terrorists. We only reject terrorism in general.

His excellency said: More than two or three years ago, Qatar took strict measures to prevent the transfer of any sum of money, except to parties that spend these funds on charitable works.

He clarified that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has direct supervision of the charitable organizations in the state.

His excellency said: We took these measures, not because of previous violations, but out of Qatar's concern about regulating this process to prevent it from being exploited in an undesirable way.

Concerning Qatar's measures to promote its relations with Israel and whether these measures are aimed at obtaining concessions related to a solution to the Palestine question, the foreign minister said: These measures are aimed at encouraging the Israelis to go ahead with the peace process with all parties. Qatar wants the Israeli people, before the Israeli Government, to know that if the peace process succeeds and all sides obtain their rights in accordance with the UN resolutions, then there will be no problem in cooperating with them.

Peacemakers Summit: UAE Foreign Minister Says Summit Resolutions 'Balanced'

*NC1403140896 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1330 GMT 14 Mar 96*

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—United Arab Emirates [UAE] Foreign Minister Rashid bin-'Abdallah al-Nu'aymi has described the conference of peacemakers held in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday as "successful," especially as it followed recent incidents that halted the peace process. He added that the summit sent a clear message of support for the peace march, which has proven itself and has already borne some fruit.

In a press statement today the UAE foreign minister said the Sharm al-Shaykh summit adopted balanced resolutions, served the good of all the region's nations, met the requirements of regional security and peace, and strengthened the Palestinian people's right to their land.

He praised UAE President Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan's continuing efforts to unite and strengthen Arab ranks and noted that Shaykh Zayid has made repeated calls to heal Arab divisions.

Al-Nu'aymi said he hopes Shaykh Zayid's calls have found an echo in the Arab world so that the Arabs can reach agreement on all the issues.

Peacemakers Summit: Mubarak, al-Baz Interviewed Prior to Summit

*TA1403140296 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
14 Mar 96 p A6*

[Report by Gay Bekhor, special correspondent to the Sharm al-Shaykh conference]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "As we have not yet completed the peace process and as it is still going on, we can expect more (terrorist) activities to take place," Egyptian President Husni Mubarak said yesterday. He gave this interview to HA'ARETZ while awaiting the arrival of Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres at the Sharm al-Shaykh Airport a short time before the conference.

[HA'ARETZ] What is your opinion of the Syrian boycott?

[Mubarak] There is no problem with Syria. The Syrians did not agree to attend the conference, and they have their own reasons, which we respect. As you see, however, the conference is being held as planned.

[HA'ARETZ] Palestinian terror against Israel is the focus of the conference. Is Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir 'Arafat doing enough to combat that terror?

[Mubarak] 'Arafat is doing all he can. He and his authority are acting as best they can, and Egypt is following the developments. Basically, our stand is that terror should be ended and peace achieved. The peace process is the objective of this conference. We are against and will oppose anything that holds up peace. Peace is the primary desire of the nations of this region, while terror is not; it is hated by the nations of this region. At today's conference, we will review the obstacles holding up peace and the steps needed for the peace process to proceed. As long as the process continues, we can expect more (terrorist) activities to take place. That is something we can prepare to handle.

[HA'ARETZ] Can the conference endorse efficient operational decisions or will they be merely declarative?

[Mubarak] The conference will stop the deterioration in the peace process, and terror should be condemned in general, which we will do. In addition, we must discuss security moves that will help maintain the momentum of the peace process, because it is the only way to put an end to terrorism. The conflict should be resolved, and that will also resolve the problem of terror. [passage omitted]

Dr. Usamah al-Baz, the Egyptian president's political adviser, is firmly opposed to viewing the regional terror as "Islamic." Speaking with HA'ARETZ yesterday, he said that "we must avoid confusing terrorism with Islam, which are two totally different things. Generalizations about Islamic terror are an exaggeration and are simply wrong." [passage omitted]

He asserted: "We will not have anyone speak of Islamic terror, just as we would not like anyone to speak of Jewish terror, and so on. We can speak of radical movements and even spell out the names of the terror organizations, but we must not refer to them as Islamic movements."

As to intelligence cooperation, he said he does not know of any "specific intentions." He noted, however, that "this is not about a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian mechanism but rather a multilateral one, involving the entire international community. It will be a mechanism and not a body, and right now there is more than one proposal regarding the character it should assume. I cannot be more specific."

Al-Baz hoped that "the reasons that caused Syria to stay away from the conference will be removed in the near future, because we need Syrian cooperation and involvement. Syria is undoubtedly an important party in the peace process." He noted that contacts are under way between Cairo and Damascus, and he did not rule out the possibility that Egypt would brief Syria on the outcome of the conference.

Asked about how Damascus can be seen as a partner in the process while it hosts the leaders of 10 Palestinian opposition organizations, al-Baz replied: "We must remember that Syria is committed to peace." He noted that Syria has always honored its commitments.

Al-Baz added that Syria believes that if the peace process is to be resuscitated, another Madrid conference should be convened. Sometimes Damascus assumes certain stands for negotiating purposes, but that is part of any negotiations. [passage omitted]

Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab Affairs: Arab League Council Concludes First Session

NC1403171496 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1500 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Arab League foreign ministerial council concluded its first closed meeting this afternoon. The council will meet this evening to complete discussions of the topics on the agenda. Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid said that at the evening session, the council will complete discussions of the remaining issues on the agenda. He said that if the council fails to complete discussion of all remaining issues, it will decide to complete discussion on the level of the Arab delegates to the Arab League.

'Abd-al-Majid said that at the morning session, the foreign ministers discussed Arab reconciliation because it is the goal of every Arab citizen. He voiced his hope that the Arab ranks will be closed as soon as possible. During the morning session, the ministers postponed ratifying the draft plans of the code of honor of Arab security and cooperation, of the Arab court of justice, and of the mechanism for solving disputes to the upcoming session.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Arab League Council Holds Second 'Closed' Session

NC1403203896 Cairo MENA in English 1938 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—The Arab League Council held a second closed session here this evening for resuming talks on the issues placed on the meetings' agenda.

The topics include the Afro-Arab dialogue and the league's budget along with the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute over Hanish island.

Inter-Arab Affairs: 'Abd-al-Majid, Others Address Arab League

NC1403143596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1310 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid has restated that the peacemakers summit indicated international determination to support the peace settlement. The summit reiterated that the region will not be left alone in facing the problems that obstruct the peace process, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid added.

In his address to the 105th session of the Arab League Council today 'Abd-al-Majid said the Arab League has sent messages to the United States and Russia, in their capacity as the sponsors of the peace conference, and to the Italian Government, which is the EU chairman. He noted that the Arab League's messages restated the need to continue the peace process. The Syrian Government has also sent messages to the United States and Russia out of its absolute faith that peace in the region should be just and comprehensive based on international legitimacy and the land-for-peace principle.

Continuing, Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid said the Arab nation supports peace and advocates that the just and comprehensive peace must prevail in the Middle East region. He pointed out that the Palestinian issue and the continuing Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and south Lebanon will remain the main problem for the Arab countries. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said the Arab region will only enjoy security and stability after a just and comprehensive settlement and after the Palestinian people obtain their right to set up their independent state.

In his address the Arab League secretary general praised the peacemakers summit and its final statement, which contained a clear-cut desire to salvage peace after all the means to achieve it had almost become deadlocked and after the voice of extremism on the two sides had become louder. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid stressed the need to resume the negotiations on the other peace tracks immediately to thwart the schemes of the advocates of extremism. He called for halting the policy of mass punishment and supporting the Palestinian Authority and enabling it to achieve the Palestinian people's hopes and dreams of an independent state.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid cautioned that the current Arab situation is extremely serious, particularly after the emergence of various scenarios threatening to redraw the map of the Arab world on new political, economic, and social bases. The secretary general expressed fears that joint Arab action will become history due to current Arab circumstances. He said this requires us to support the sincere and generous calls of those leaders who urged pan-Arab reconciliation.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said the Arab court of justice and the preventive mechanism for administering and resolving inter-Arab disputes represent two important mechanisms to rectify the imbalance in inter-Arab relations. He expressed the hope that the Arab League Council will adopt resolutions to ratify the two mechanisms and the code of ethics concerning Arab security and cooperation.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid pointed out that the current regional developments subject the peace process to a serious setback, threaten to move it backward, and give the advocates of violence and fanaticism a chance to strike at the peace process. He noted that the Israeli measures give priority to the concept of security over the concept of peace, adding that the closure of and siege on some Palestinian cities, the ban on the employment of Palestinian workers, and collective punishment will greatly harm the peace process and damage the Palestinian economy.

He blamed Israel's continuing maneuvers for the slow pace and stagnation of the peace process. He added, for example, that on 29 April last year Israel announced the seizure of land in Jerusalem in defiance of the international community; it deliberately procrastinated over its withdrawal from the occupied Golan and south Lebanon and refused to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid emphasized that the Israeli positions and measures have had a serious impact on the peace process, which has become a strategic option for the Arabs. He stressed the need for Arab solidarity as part of pan-Arab reconciliation based on frankness. He noted that in recent months inter-Arab relations had witnessed an improvement in ties between Saudi Arabia and both Yemen and Jordan, the restoration of ties between Kuwait and Jordan, and the return of contacts between Syria and Iraq over water.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid called for accelerating the steps to establish a strong Arab economic grouping capable of serving the supreme Arab interests and living up to the challenges and risks facing Arab economic security, particularly in the fields of water and food. He noted that the Gulf crisis still represents the biggest challenge to the march of common Arab action. Add to this the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict, which we hope will be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international laws, the Libyan-Western crisis and its impact on neighboring countries, Iran's continuing occupation of the United Arab Emirates' islands, and the tragic conditions experienced by the Somali people.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid thanked the Arab League Council for its trust by reappointing him for a second term as secretary general. He added: Egypt's nomination and President Husni Mubarak's trust in me are a great honor, crowned by your acceptance, which I consider to be renewed confidence in my ability to assume the great responsibility of defending the supreme interests of our nation. Concluding his speech, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid promised to do his best to safeguard the Arab League and reemphasize its Arab and cultural identity amid the unprecedented challenges facing our world of today.

Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Mubarak Al Khalifah, Bahraini minister of foreign affairs and chairman of the previous session, made a statement in which he said that the Arab arena witnessed positive developments in the field of Arab action to clear the Arab air and close ranks in order to restore Arab solidarity to its clear and firm foundations. He noted that the peace process in the region was accompanied by important developments on the path toward achieving a fair, comprehensive, and permanent peace and restoration of the Arab rights—foremost of which is enabling the Palestinian people to regain all their rights, including their right to establish their own independent state with Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. He pointed out that the pre-peace stage obliged us to enhance our solidarity and cooperation and coordinate our stance on all levels to regain our rights and liberate our territories from occupation. He pointed out that we are entering the 21st century, with all the developments and challenges it poses, something that impels us to enhance our solidarity, cohesion, and joint action.

Shaykh Al Khalifah stressed that the plans of the code of honor, Arab security, and the Arab court of justice, which top issues placed on the agenda of the Arab Foreign Ministers Council, deserve attention and care. He noted that the phenomenon of terrorism and extremism has become serious and threatens the security of our countries. He called for concerted efforts to confront this phenomenon. He earlier congratulated Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat Abd-al-Majid on the extension of his mandate for another term, stressing that this is a gain for all parties.

Habib Ben Yahya, Tunisian minister of foreign affairs and chairman of the Arab League's current session, made a statement in which he stressed that the successive developments and transformations in the region and the resulting challenges require collective action so that the Arab countries may be able to play a major role in making their decisions and directing developments in their interests. He stressed the need to clear the Arab air, achieve Arab reconciliation and continue good offices to avoid pitfalls and interference in domestic affairs. He said that Tunisia is very eager to enhance joint Arab action and bolster the Arab League to play its role in a way that guarantees common Arab interests. He said that the plan proposed by Tunisia to set up an Arab mechanism for settling disputes peacefully stems from the Arab League charter and will enhance its effectiveness. He noted that this proposal is in line with the plans to establish a code of honor and Arab security and coordination, and the Arab court of justice.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Arab League Chief Cited on Council Meetings

NC1503073296 Cairo MENA in English 2256 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Arab League Chief Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid said that the Council will remain in permanent session till the end of the proceedings of the 105th session.

'Abd-al-Majid added in a press conference held after the close of the second in-camera sitting tonight, that the Council will hold a meeting at the level of chief delegates next week to endorse the recommendations of the political, administrative, economic, and financial committees.

The second sitting lasted about six hours.

On putting off discussion of the items on the mechanism on the settlement of disputes among Arab countries, the Arab code of honour, and the Arab court of justice, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid said there are some remarks from a number of members on these items.

They will be examined during the next session, the Arab League secretary general noted.

Some countries pointed out that ratification of such items necessitate the convocation of an Arab summit, he said, ruling out the likelihood of holding such a summit at the present stage.

He added at the press conference which was attended by Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahya, chairman of the current League Council session, that the Council has authorised him to follow up the three items at the level of the ad hoc committees and to work out agreed-upon formulas.

'Abd-al-Majid said he will then address the Arab leaders on the three items, specially that of the Arab court of justice.

Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid dismissed reports about a condemnation of Turkey in draft resolution on Arab water and the Euphrates untrue.

He noted that there is difference in viewpoints between Syria and Turkey in this regard, stressing the matter can be resolved through dialogue and the basis of the neighbourliness.

The Arab League chief called upon Turkey to consider the issue from this perspective.

On the Libya-West Lockerbie crisis, Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid said the seven-man Arab committee met today and decided that it is necessary to carry on contacts with the parties concerned with the crisis stressing that the Libyan position is a hundred percent right.

The UN Security Council will hold a meeting on March 21 to consider sanctions imposed on Libya, he said, indicating that the seven-man committee will exert further efforts to expound Libya's position to other parties and Security Council members.

He hoped that there would be no escalation of the sanctions.

The League secretary general touched on the financial crisis experienced by the League, saying that he presented a memorandum on that score to the foreign ministers covering details of the financial deficit.

The Arab foreign ministers promised they will study the memo and take positive action, he stressed.

For his part, the Tunisian minister of foreign affairs voiced satisfaction for the member states' consensus on a second term for Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid as League chief.

The meetings of the Ministerial Council were held in a positive atmosphere, Ben Yahya, current chairman of the Council, said.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Algerian, Egyptian Ministers Meet in Cairo

LD1403182996 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Foreign Minister Ahmad Attaf today held talks with his Egyptian counterpart, 'Amr Musa, at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's headquarters. Following the meeting, Ahmad Attaf made a statement to the Algerian Press Agency in which he said that the meeting included three main points, among them was assessing the Algerian-Egyptian cooperation in various fields. The bilateral follow-up committee will meet on Saturday [16 March], before the meeting of the joint committee that will take place shortly. [passage omitted]

Inter-Arab Affairs: Jordanian PM, Kuwaiti FM Discuss Normalization

NC1403155396 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1435 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—After his meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa today, Jordanian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti said that his discussions with Musa were good and dealt with numerous current Arab issues, especially the peace process.

Al-Kabariti denied that there is a Jordanian-Syrian disagreement, pointing out that he held a series of intensive meetings on the sidelines of the Arab League session with the Kuwaiti, Syrian, and Lebanese foreign ministers.

He described his meeting with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad as serious and excellent, noting that they agreed to hasten the normalization of relations between Jordan and Kuwait.

Remarking that Jordan was never absent from any international conference, Al-Kabariti described the Sharm al-Shaykh summit as a distinguished international assembly as illustrated by the delegations attending it and the results it achieved.

Regarding his meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', al-Kabariti said that they discussed bilateral relations. He said it was an excellent meeting and expressed hope of taking Jordanian-Syrian relations to new and wider horizons.

He added that he discussed the Sharm al-Shaykh conference with Faruq al-Shar', explaining that Jordan had a special stand to make on the issue. Al-Kabariti said that Jordan believes that a forum which brought together the leaders of 29 countries was a historic opportunity to put forth the Arab viewpoint on the peace efforts.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Iraqi, Yemeni FM's Confer in Cairo

JN1403164596 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1620 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (INA) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf met here today with his Yemeni counterpart, 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed current Arab issues of mutual concern, the agenda of the 105th Arab League Council session, and ways to enhance bilateral ties to serve the interests of both countries.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Al-Kabariti Briefs Syrian, Lebanese Ministers on Summit

NC1403134196 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1320 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Jordanian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', and Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz held a tripartite meeting today on the sidelines of the Arab League Council meeting in Cairo.

They discussed the development of the Middle East peace march, particularly on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Al-Kabariti briefed the Syrian and Lebanese ministers on the results of the Conference of Peacemakers which met in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Syrian FM Meets Counterparts in Cairo

JN1403181296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1615 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo—Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' today met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal. They discussed the items on the agenda for the Arab League Council session, the peace process, and issues of common interest.

The foreign minister also met with Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz today. They coordinated stands on the items that will be discussed at the Arab League Council session. In addition, al-Shar' met with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa this evening. They discussed the latest developments in the region.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Syrian, Egyptian FM's Confer

NC1403160396 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1500 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa met with his Syrian counterpart Faruq al-Shar' on the sidelines of the Arab League Council's 105th session, to discuss the results of the international summit of peacemakers, which was held in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday. After the meeting, Musa said that he emphasized the need to continue the peace process on the various tracks, noting that this is an Arab demand.

Responding to a question on Syria's failure to attend the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, Musa said although Syria did not attend, we had already expressed our view that Syria's attendance would have been an addition to the summit. The summit provided an opportunity to put various views on the table, he said, and added that Syria would have expressed the same view that President Husni Mubarak expressed, views aimed at strengthening the peace process, which is based on the Madrid agreement and the land-for-peace principle.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Syria's al-Shar' Comments on Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

JN1403193896 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' today met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal. They discussed the items on the agenda for the Arab League Council session, the peace process, and issues of common interest.

The foreign minister also met with Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz today. They coordinated stands on the items that will be discussed at the Arab League Council session. In addition, al-Shar' met with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa this evening. They discussed the latest developments in the region.

After his meeting with 'Amr Musa, al-Shar' answered reporters' questions. He said that the statement issued at the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting is not balanced, because it serves Israel's stands and interests at the expense of Arab interests and rights.

Al-Shar' said that Syria's decision not to participate in the meeting was made after careful study and that this meeting, in view of the circumstances under which it was held and the charged atmosphere preceding it, will serve Israel's interests and not the Arabs'. He said: If we had been certain that there was enough time for in-depth discussion and an objective exchange of views to reiterate our well-known stand on terrorism and the differentiation between what is and is not terrorism — that is, the struggle to resist occupation — we would not have hesitated to participate.

Al-Shar' added: Syria has repeatedly condemned terrorism and the killing of innocent people, based on the premise of its principled and humanitarian tenets. He said: We believe that the meeting could have been more effective if there had been a preparatory committee and if enough time had been allotted to define the meeting's objectives, but the meeting was held in a remarkably hasty manner

Al-Shar' added: Some of the Arab speeches delivered at the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting were good and reflected the sound Arab stand.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Musa Says Summit Committee Will Meet 'in Next 2 Weeks'

NC1403223196 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2210 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has said that the follow-up committee formed by the peacemakers summit, which was held in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday, will hold its first meeting in the next two weeks.

In a statement on the sidelines of the Arab League Council meetings this evening, he said the meeting might be held in the United States or in another country and that it might be held below ministerial level. He asserted that there is continuous action to implement the communique's clauses.

The peacemakers summit decided to set up a committee at the level of ambassadors to follow up on the conference's resolutions. Whether these meetings will be regular or otherwise will be decided in the committee's first meeting.

Inter-Arab Affairs: Saudi FM Expresses Support for Peace Process

NC1403134096 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1255 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 14 Mar (MENA)—Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal has emphasized his country's backing for all the stages of the Middle East peace process.

In remarks on the sidelines of the Arab League Council's meeting today, al-Faysal said that real peace will lead to justice, fairness, and comprehensive stability in the region.

He pointed out that the speech he delivered to the Conference of Peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday expressed these things. He said he believes that if terrorism is to be condemned, it must be condemned in all its forms, because it undermines the gains of nations everywhere.

Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal added: At the Conference of Peacemakers we sensed that everyone backs the peace process and wishes it to continue. Everyone wants to avoid giving the opponents of peace a chance to ruin it.

He asserted that the peace process must be assessed according to the criteria set at the Madrid peace conference. He also said ways to expedite the peace process must be discussed, describing this as the "ideal way" to achieve peace.

Inter-Arab Affairs: UAE FM Gives Statement on Summit, Terrorism

NC1503104196 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0612 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 15 Mar (MENA)—United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Rashid Bin-'Abdallah al-Nu'aymi has affirmed that the success of the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh is a clear message to all peace-loving forces in the world because of the speed with which the final statement was approved.

He is currently heading his country's delegation to the meetings of the Arab League Council. He said in statements to the AL-AHRAM newspaper published today that President Husni Mubarak's call to convene the summit and the quick response to this call from world leaders confirms the soundness of the Egyptian and Arab stance to bolster and entrench the peace march. He clarified that inasmuch as the summit highlighted the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, it confirmed the need to guarantee these rights so that these people can live in peace, without a siege being imposed on them or without being terrorized.

He said that the summit asserted the continuation of the peace process on all tracks.

With regard to terrorism, the UAE foreign minister said all the participants affirmed the importance of denouncing and opposing violence. He demanded that a definite stance be taken against the countries that help terrorism or occupy the land of others, such as Israel and Iran, which has occupied his country's islands. He said that everyone must work to realize Shaykh Zayid's call for Arab reconciliation and unity in order to unite Arab efforts to establish peace and put an end to violence.

Islamic Affairs

Political Islam Review: AL-SHA'B 8 Mar

NC1503083096

[FBIS Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 8 March edition of the Arabic language newspaper AL-SHA'B that pertain to political Islamic issues.

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1. AL-SHA'B Joins Internet
2. Shukri Opens Labor Party Office in al-Ma'adi
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6. EOHR Expresses Concern Over Government-Sponsored Militia
7. Writer Discusses Suicide Operations, Sudan, Privatization
8. Writer Praises Palestinian Suicide Bombers

AL-SHA'B JOINS INTERNET

A 150-word report on pages 1 and 8 says that "out of its concern to provide a new information service," AL-SHA'B has joined the world Internet network. The newspaper provides no Internet address.

SHUKRI OPENS LABOR PARTY OFFICE IN AL-MA'ADI

A 200-word report by Hasan Al-Qamhawi on page 1 says Labor Party Leader Ibrahim Shukri opened a Labor Party office in the Cairo suburb of al-Ma'adi on 6 March. Speaking on this occasion, Shukri said "Islam is the Solution." He dealt with the "experiment of the Refah Party in Turkey," which has organized its members and has become a "majority party."

HILMI MURAD CRITICIZES NEW PRESS LAW

In a 500-word article on page 1, Labor Party Deputy Leader Muhammad Hilmi Murad discusses the new draft press law that is being prepared to "revise" law no. 93/1995. Both the government-owned and opposition newspapers have sharply criticized law no. 93/1995 with the latter often describing it as the "law on the assassination of the press." He says that while the new draft law has abolished the "preventive custody" of journalists, this abolishment is not "complete" for three reasons. 1) The law excludes journalists who "slander the president of the Republic." 2) The law permits the "arrest" of a journalist for questioning by a public prosecutor instead of summoning him by letter or telephone. This is tantamount to preventive custody. 3) The abolition of preventive custody is confined to journalists registered with the Journalists Association and does not include writers, politicians, and intellectuals who write in newspapers.

LABOR PARTY REJECTS PRIVATIZATION PLANS

A 1,000-word report on page 2 says the Labor Party secretariat held a meeting on 2 March to discuss the government's decision to "sell public sector companies." A statement issued after the meeting describes the decision as hasty and accuses the government of "completely obeying the IMF orders to sell the public sector, lay off its workers, and sabotage the national economy." The statement urges the General Federation of Trade Unions and other trade union and professional organizations to "struggle" and confront the privatization process.

ARTICLE CLAIMS ELAT IS EGYPTIAN TERRITORY

A 1,000-word article by Mahfuz 'Azzam on page 4 refers to a previous article by AL-SHA'B Chief Editor Majdi Ahmad Husayn in which he reveals that Israel "has usurped an important piece of Egyptian territory" and that Egyptian officials have remained silent about this "crime." The land in question is the village of Umm al-Rashrash, now the site of the Israeli town of Elat on the Gulf of 'Aqaba. The writer notes that London-based Arabic language newspapers first published this story, citing an Arab League report. The writer notes that the English language newspaper EGYPTIAN GAZETTE said in March 1957 that "Britain deliberately included Elat and hundreds of yards" on the Gulf of Aqaba within Palestinian territory to separate Egypt from Trans-Jordan. The writer adds that Egyptian territory on the Gulf of 'Aqbaba continued to include the Umm al-Rashrash village until the end of the British mandate on Palestine. He adds that after the signing of the armistice agreement between the "Zionist entity" and Egypt, the Israeli forces advanced in the first days of March 1994 and occupied the coastal strip on the head of the Gulf, including the "Egyptian village of Umm al-Rashrash."

EOHR EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED MILITIA

A 400-word report on page 8 says the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) has voiced " grave concern" over reports that the Egyptian Government has formed an "armed militia" to confront Muslim fundamentalists in the Sahil Salim area in Asyut Governorate. This "civil militia" has started setting up roadblocks, searching people, and checking their identity. The militia consists so far of 80 individuals who have been issued with automatic weapons and pistols. The EOHR has warned that these measures "violate the law and Constitution, increase the phenomenon of bloody violence in society, and encourage citizens to take the law into their own hands." The EOHR deplores "official media encouragement of these measures, which the semi-official Newspaper AL-AHRAM on 4 March 1996 said are designed to confront extremism and enhance national feeling and popular awakening in the governorate." On the contrary, the EOHR believes that these measures are a "prelude to a civil war" threatening the entire human rights system.

WRITER DISCUSSES SUICIDE OPERATIONS, SUDAN, PRIVATIZATION

Labor Party Secretary General 'Adil Husayn writes a 3,000-word article on page 5 in which he says he will discuss three topics: "the Martyrdom Operations, the Intrigues against Sudan, and the Sale of the National Wealth to Foreigners." The writer first notes that he was in the United States "for study and contemplation" and returned recently to Egypt.

On the first topic, the "martyrdom operations," he says that all of Israel's conventional and nuclear weapons will not save it from its current predicament. He says the "Zionists imagined that the Iraqi Scud missiles fired in 1990 would be the last deadly blows to hit their towns." Suddenly suicide bombers, whom he calls "human missiles," "eliminated in one week all their hopes of imposing humiliation on us without paying a heavy price in blood." Husayn notes that the suicide operations are a new phenomenon in Arab history. He attributes them to the current "Islamic awakening" and to "divine" support which has made throngs of people return to the "religion of God." He says that Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq is "playing with fire" by threatening to attack Syria, Lebanon, and Iran. Enlarging the circle of conflagration will upset all balances and make the martyrdom-seeking youth more resolved and determined. Referring to Peres' declared war on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Husayn says that the Israelis cannot extinguish "the light of God."

Discussing the "intrigues against Sudan," Husayn says the recent UN Security Council resolution threatening to impose sanctions against Sudan aims to partition the country into several mini-states that would come under the control of Egypt's enemies and threaten its share of the Nile waters. He says the Egyptian Government should have been aware of these dangers to Egypt's interests. Instead, the Egyptian official media have continued their campaigns and intrigues against Sudan. Referring to the current elections in Sudan, the writers says the Egyptian official media are the last to be entitled to say that these elections will be rigged, considering the well-known fact that the recent People's Assembly elections in Egypt were also rigged.

On the "sale of the national wealth to foreigners," 'Adil Husayn discusses the government's privatization plans. He says "the principles governing the privatization process must be more specific and must be incorporated in an official document submitted to the nation and its leaders for serious discussion before approving them." He says the agreements signed with the IMF and the World Bank have caused "apprehension" among the citizens.

The writer devotes the last third of his article to the current presidential campaign in the United States. He says "Christian religious values" are high on the agenda of both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party candidates. Republican Party candidates are competing in declaring their commitment to the family, protecting its role in society, denouncing homosexuality, and banning abortion. "If Clinton does not adopt this stance, pressure on him to approve a bill to prevent violence and sex on television will mount."

WRITER PRAISES PALESTINIAN SUICIDE BOMBERS

On the back page, Managing Editor Mahmud Bakri writes a 400-word column entitled "Glory to the Martyrs." He says the "enemy is drinking from the same cup we have drunk for scores of years." Referring to those who denounced the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv explosions, the writer says "they have forgotten the massacres of Dayr Yasin, Kafr Qasim, Sabra, Shatila, Ibrahimi Mosque, and Jerusalem. They are now shedding "crocodile tears" over the "criminals" who have violated our "land and honor" and turned the land of Palestine into "ruins in which owls hoot" after displacing the original inhabitants and turning them into refugees in their own country and abroad. The writer says "our struggle with the Zionists is a struggle for existence." He concludes by praising the suicide bombers as "martyrs" and urging Arab and Islamic youth to emulate them.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: Israeli 'Siege' To Be Lifted Partially 15 Mar

JN1403203096 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Israeli occupation authorities announced that they will lift the military siege banning travel between Palestinian towns in the West Bank tomorrow, 15 March, between 0600 and 1600 Palestine time [0400-1400 GMT].

The decision allows people to travel between towns only during this period. After 1600, the military siege will be imposed again for the twelfth day.

Palestinian Affairs: Gazans Stuck in Jericho Allowed To Travel 15 Mar

JN1403205196 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brigadier General Fahmi 'Akilah, director of the Jericho Governorate Police Department, said that it was agreed with the Israeli side to allow the Gazans who are stuck in Jericho because of the siege to travel to Gaza at 1200 [1000 GMT] tomorrow. The citizens will be transported in special buses that will leave from the offices of the military liaison committee at the entrance to Jericho. Brig. Gen. 'Akilah urged citizens to be at the location on time.

A meeting was held this morning between a committee representing Gazans who are stuck in Jericho and representatives of the local news media at Jericho Municipality. The mayor of Jericho attended. The Gazans urged the National Authority to resolve their problem.

Palestinian Affairs: Official Announces al-Karamah Crossing Hours for 15 Mar

JN1403202696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The director of the Crossings and Borders Department has informed us that the al-Karamah, formerly Allenby, crossing will be open both ways for travelers tomorrow, 15 March, from 0600 to 1400 Palestine time [0400-1200 GMT].

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah, Other Groups Seek UN Intervention To End Siege

JN1403212896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Representatives from Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, FIDA [Palestinian Democratic Union Party], and the Palestinian People's Party today sent a memorandum to UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali asking him to pressure the Israeli Government to lift the siege it imposes on the Palestinian people.

The memorandum was handed over to Terje Larsen, the UN representative to the Palestinian Authority, during a meeting these representatives had with him today.

Larsen stressed that the Israeli military siege imposed on the Palestinian territories will only exacerbate the economic hardship of the Palestinian people.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Meets Turkey's Demirel; Statements Reported

JN1403171396 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat demanded an end to the military siege the Israelis have imposed on the Palestinians. In a joint news conference with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel in Gaza today, 'Arafat said the Palestinian economy is losing $6 million a day as a result of the siege.

The president said his talks with Demirel were positive and fruitful. He also said the summit of peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh, Egypt, was successful.

'Arafat noted the final statement issued by the summit and the determination of the leaders who attended the summit to preserve the peace process and follow up all issues through the committees that were set up.

The Turkish president said his country is prepared to contribute to the building of infrastructure in Palestine and to support the port project and the housing projects.

Demirel stressed that his country is ready to cooperate with the Palestinian people in all fields.

Palestinian Affairs: Turkey's Demirel Arrives in Gaza, Meets With 'Arafat

TA1403152396 Ankara ANATOLIA in English 1440 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Gaza, March 14 (A.A.) — President Suleyman Demirel said on Thursday [14 March] that recent developments on the way to peace were golden opportunities and should be evaluated well.

Demirel who proceeded to Gaza concluding his visit in Israel was welcomed with an official ceremony in Palestinian head of state Yasir 'Arafat's palace.

Speaking at a joint news conference following interdelegational meetings between the two countries, Demirel said Turkey wanted Palestine to improve, adding recent developments on the way to peace were a golden opportunity which should be evaluated well.

Demirel voiced Turkey's willingness to cooperate for the reconstruction of Palestine and urged that the two sides should be patient to achieve success. 'Peace process is for the benefit of all countries in the region as well as Arab and Jewish people' he added.

'Arafat in his part said Wednesday's international terrorism summit formed an important platform for peace, adding he and Demirel held beneficial talks.

Palestinian Affairs: Demirel Concludes Gaza Visit, Promises Reconstruction Aid

TA1403164196 Ankara ANATOLIA in English 1600 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Gaza, March 14 (A.A.) — President Suleyman Demirel left for Israel on Thursday [14 March] concluding his visit to Palestine which was the second leg of his tour to the Middle East.

Speaking during a lunch which Palestinian head of state Yasir 'Arafat gave in his honor, Demirel said he was pleased to be in Palestine adding Turkey always supported Palestine and will always be with them.

Addressing to 'Arafat, Demirel said 'you are the architecture of peace and hero of your people. Turkish people appreciates your efforts and likes you' adding 'installing peace is the most hardest thing, let us not surrender to the enemies of peace.'

Demirel said Turkey will extend help to the reconstruction of Gaza and West Bank, adding Turkey was willing to set up close cooperation with Palestine.

Mentioning about terrorism conference which took place in Sharm al-Shaykh city in Egypt, Demirel recalled that Turkey was a member of a study group which will be set up within the framework of the conference and added, 'Turkey will continue to support Palestine here.'

'Arafat in his part said Demirel's visit was very important for Palestinian people, adding there were positive relations between the two countries.

Stressing his belief that Turkey would play an important role in peace process, 'Arafat said 'with this strong determination, we trust you, our close friends and Allah.'

Demirel will leave for Turkey after visiting Israeli aeroplane industry.

Palestinian Affairs: Ben-Gurion Airport Map Found in Gaza Strip Hamas Cache

TA1503095996 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p A1

[Report by Eytan Rabin]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Within the framework of the large- scale searches conducted over the last two weeks by the Palestinian security forces in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] activists were found in the possession of very detailed maps of Ben-Gurion Airport. Palestinian security sources reported this to Israel.

The sources said that the searches also exposed additional maps, huge quantities of weapons, leaflets, and seditious materials. The Ben-Gurion Airport maps were found in a Gaza Strip cache.

Israeli sources say that the maps discovered indicate that Hamas planned to carry out an attack at the airport and with this aim in mind, sought to learn as much as possible about the site before carrying out the attack. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Reportedly Will Not Let Israelis 'Sleep in Peace'

NC1403220296 Paris AFP in English 2127 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem, March 14 (AFP) — The Palestinian radical group Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] warned Thursday [14 March] that it would not allow Israelis to sleep in peace, mocking the words of their Prime Minister Shim'on Peres after the anti-terrorism summit.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which was behind three of the four suicide bombings in Israel since February 25 that claimed more than 60 lives, also had words of warning for Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat. "We will carry on the struggle against Zionist occupation, whatever the sacrifices and whatever the price," Hamas said in its first reaction to the summit in Egypt hastily convened after the bombings.

"The Zionists will not sleep in peace after this summit. Our people are determined to struggle for their freedom and independence," the group said in a statement sent to AFP.

After the summit in Egypt on Wednesday at which world leaders including Arafat vowed to launch a campaign to uproot terrorism, Peres said Israelis could now "sleep more easily." Hamas said that 'Arafat's Palestinian self-rule authority was "in the same trench as the enemy" and warned against its crackdown on Islamic militants.

"Let the Palestinian Authority know that our people can not stay silent in the face of repression and injustice, that there could be serious repercussions for the unity of the Palestinian people," it said. Palestinian police have rounded up 600 suspected Islamic militants since the bombings, while Israeli forces have arrested almost 300 more.

Palestinian Affairs: Poll Finds 76 Percent Support Attacks on Israeli Targets

TA1403131296 Jerusalem AL-NAHAR in Arabic 13 Mar 96 p 3

[Report by Amin Abu-Wardah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Nabulus, QUDS PRESS — A public opinion poll conducted in the northern West Bank indicates that a large majority of the Palestinian people fear that the recent developments may lead to a "civil war" among the Palestinians. The same majority expressed opposition to Palestinian Police raids on institutions, colleges, and organizations believed to be connected to Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement].

Responding to a question in this regard, 84 percent of those polled said that they oppose and reject these raids. Approximately 7 percent expressed support for the raids, and 9 percent had no opinion.

With regard to the continuation of armed attacks by resistance factions in the territories that remain under occupation and are witness to settlement activities, 76 percent of the respondents said that they support these attacks against the Israeli occupation despite the peace process. Some 19 percent opposed the attacks, and 11 percent had no opinion [figures as published].

According to the results of the poll, which was conducted for the al-Najah National University students union in Nabulus, 74 percent of the respondents supported the cease-fire conditions proposed by the 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam Battalions for them to halt their armed attacks against Israeli targets. These conditions include releasing the prisoners, stopping the confiscation of Palestinian land, ending arbitrary measures against civilians, and halting the pursuit of fugitives. Some 7 percent opposed these conditions, and 19 percent expressed no opinion.

Approximately 10 percent of the respondents supported the Palestinian Authority's [PA] struggle against the Palestinian Islamic forces because of their position against the peace process, while 79 percent said they oppose any step of this kind, and 11 percent had no opinion.

Approximately 45 percent of the respondents called on Hamas to give the PA a good chance to continue the peace process with Israel, while 37 percent opposed this, and 18 percent had no opinion.

Some 45 percent of those polled said that the recent Palestinian Legislative Council elections were fair, while 36 percent said the elections were unfair, and 19 percent expressed no opinion.

A large majority, 76 percent, of the Palestinians polled in the largest towns in the northern West Bank — Nabulus, Tulkarm, and Qalqilyah — said that they do not differentiate between the Israeli right wing and left wing. Moreover, they believe that the political positions of these two wings regarding the legitimate rights of the Palestinians are identical. Approximately 15 percent of the respondents said that there is a difference between the positions of Labor and Likud, while 9 percent had no opinion.

Palestinian Affairs: More on Hamas Memorandum to Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

MM1403143196 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 14 Mar 96 p 7

[Unattributed report: "Hamas Asks Summit To Intervene With Israel"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London, AL-HAYAH — The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) addressed a memorandum to the leaders who participated in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit yesterday, expressing its willingness to engage in a dialogue and urging them to put pressure on Israel to get it to "respond to the calls of wisdom and reason for dealing positively with the initiatives presented by the movement on several occasions." The movement welcomed any "good mediation offices" offered by the conferees in this connection. [passage omitted]

The movement's memorandum pointed out that Hamas, with its political and military wings, "is a resistance and national liberation movement against the occupiers. So it considers the armed actions of the [Izz-al-Din] al-Qassam Battalions acts of self-defense, with the exception of some unintended injuries inflicted on civilians, which conflict with the policy pursued by Hamas itself." [passage omitted]

The memorandum listed a number of principles adopted by Hamas in its resistance against the occupation. The most important principles are:

"1. Its clashes and confrontation should be with Army forces and some supporting armed formations;

"2. To exercise the right of self-defense against units of the occupation's agents or the raids of its armed settlers;

"3. To focus operations on military or semi-military targets, and to avoid any other targets, especially civilians: women, children, and the elderly;

"4. To respect the other side, even during an armed clash, that is, not to mutilate [the bodies], in contrast to what the Israeli occupation forces are doing to our Palestinian people;

"5. Not to attack any Western people or interests inside or outside the occupied territories;

"6. Not to carry out any operations outside occupied Palestine, as action should be conducted in the occupied territories, because they are the arena for the natural and legitimate confrontation with the occupation."

The memorandum added: "The operations of the 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam Battalions focus on Army units and parallel military formations. Some of these confrontations took place between three of the movement's mujahidin and 1,000 Israeli soldiers equipped with heavy weapons and helicopters. Some attacks were launched against the camps of Army units assigned to suppress and terrorize citizens. Despite the Palestinian mujahidin's modest resources compared with the Israeli authorities' resources, they are determined to continue this unequal confrontation, because they believe they are exercising a legitimate right under international law." [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Sha'th Threatens Armed Conflict if Negotiations Fail

TA1503101096 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 15 Mar 96 p 4

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Palestinian Authority Planning Minister and leading negotiator Nabil Sha'th has threatened a return to the "armed struggle" if Israel does not yield to Palestinian demands. Sha'th, known as a political moderate and dedicated advocate of the Oslo process, was speaking at a recent Nabulus symposium televised by Palestinian television.

A videotape of the program was released yesterday by the Institute for Peace Education, the organization which first exposed tapes of belligerent speeches by Yasir 'Arafat. In it, Sha'th is seen making the following remarks:

"If the negotiations reach a dead end, we shall go back to the struggle and strife, as we did for 40 years. It is not beyond our capabilities...

"As long as Israel goes forward (with the process), there are no problems, which is why we observe the agreements of peace and non- violence. But if and when Israel will say, 'That's it, we won't talk about Jerusalem, we won't return refugees, we won't dismantle settlements, and we won't retreat from borders,' then all the acts of violence will return. Except that this time we'll have 30,000 armed Palestinian soldiers who will operate in areas in which we have unprecedented elements of freedom." [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: PFLP Says Summit Shows U.S. 'Unlimited Bias' Toward Israel

TA1403150996 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 2108 GMT 13 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP] spokesperson stated that the International Summit for Peace Makers reflects the unlimited bias of the U.S. administration to Israel. This summit is required to end the official and comprehensive terror the Israeli government practices against the Palestinian people, who are currently experiencing the harshest collective punishment policy. This is through siege, closure, and ambush threatening to cause a real starvation amongst the Palestinian people. The collective punishment is also being imposed through the policy of arrests, curfews, house demolition and land confiscation...etc. "The security measures cannot create the correct discourse for dealing with the Palestinians question, rather it reinforces occupation," the spokesperson added.

Palestinian Affairs: 'The Engineer' 'Ayyash's Home in West Bank Blown Up

TA1403131496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The home of Yahya 'Ayyash, alias The Engineer, in the village of Rafat in Samaria was blown up a short time ago. Our correspondent Dani Zaqen reports that a curfew was clamped on the village before the explosion and that the entire area was cordoned off and declared a closed military zone.

Algeria

Algeria: GIA Dismisses Leader Accused of Ordering Assassination

LD1403151296 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, the leaders of six local groups of the Armed Islamist Group [GIA] are reported to be preparing a new leadership for the movement. They have dismissed the current leader, Djamel Zitouni.

This has been revealed in an Islamist report published today [14 March], by the Arab-language daily newspaper Al-HAYAT. These local leaders accuse Zitouni of ordering the assassination last November of two leaders of the former FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] who joined the GIA.

Algeria: Founding Members of FFS Boycott Party Congress

LD1403152396 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, ten founding members of the FFS [Socialist Front Forces] have announced that they will not participate in the party's second congress to begin officially today in Algiers. They feel that Hocine Ait Ahmed, the leader of the Socialist Front Forces, and who has returned to the capital of Algeria to chair this congress, is responsible for breaking up the movement.

Algeria: FFS Leader Says Debt Rescheduling 'Has Not Helped'

LD1403174496 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The second congress of the Socialist Forces Front [FFS] opened officially today at the Palace of Nations in the presence of Hocine Ait Ahmed, FFS secretary general, and representatives of the Rome group, in addition to foreign guests.

The proceedings opened yesterday behind closed doors and continued well into the night. Over to Messaoud Boulatiour with a dispatch on today's proceedings:

[Boulatiour] The official opening of the second congress of the FFS took place today in the presence of Hocine Ait Ahmed and a large number of guests representing some political parties from Morocco [as heard] which are friendly toward the FFS, representatives from the Socialist International, and several leaders of Algerian parties, including Boualem Benhamouda, secretary general of the FLN [National Liberation Front]; Redha Malek [former prime minister]; Noureddine Boukrouh; the parties which were signatories to the National Contract; and a representative of HAMAS [Islamic Society Movement].

When he entered the conference hall Hocine Ait Ahmed was given a rapturous welcome by over 800 delegates. After the official opening ceremony, which included the national anthem and a one-minute silence in memory of all the martyrs of democracy, Ait Ahmed took the floor and delivered a speech in which he assessed the activities of his party and its various political stances toward the national and economic events that the country has experienced in the past few years.

As far as Ait Ahmed is concerned, the policy of debt rescheduling has not helped improve the plight of the citizens; the security situation is still deteriorating, he said. In his opinion, the solution lies in holding talks with everyone without any exception in order to restore peace in society. He suggested, in this connection, the holding of a national conference for peace in Algeria in order to restore hope and achieve reconciliation.

Algeria: Renewal Party Members Join Transitional National Council

LD1403225696 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Transitional National Council [TNC] is a legislative body that stemmed from the national concord conference. Today the representation at this body started to expand, specifically following the joining of five new members from the Party of Algerian Renewal [PRA]. The decision to join the TNC may enrich the dialogue and diversify the vision over the program of Ouyahia presented to the TNC members two days ago. [passage omitted]

This legislative body has 282 members now, representing various political affiliations following the joining, for the first time, of five members of the PRA. The new members might give the TNC more support vis-a-vis the wide representation of society and probably a political significance to the other parties who did not join the council. It is worthy of note that the decision of the PRA's members to joint the TNC came as a result of the success of the November elections. [passage omitted]

Egypt

Egypt: Cairo Dailies Detail Steps To Consolidate Peace

NC1503101896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0600 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, 15 Mar (MENA) — The press today noted actual signs of rapid action and instant responsiveness to the resolutions of the peacemakers summit in Sharm al-Shaykh for putting them into effect. [passage omitted]

Under the headline "Now that the Summit Has Succeeded," the AL-AHRAM editorial affirms that the summit success has served both Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres. 'Arafat succeeded in reaffirming his commitment to the peace process and to confront the acts of violence impeding it before the entire world, the paper says. It adds that Peres gained wide international support that consolidates his popularity and enhances his electoral position at this critical stage of the electoral process. The paper believes that the summit constituted a major step toward propping the pillars of the peace process.

The paper adds: It remains to be seen whether the coming stage, in light of the summit, makes it obligatory for Israel to abandon its occupation mentality and replace it with a new one that is in line with the political developments on the Palestinian-Israeli track. It is no longer acceptable for Israel to deal with the Palestinians inside and outside the self-rule areas from the position of the occupying power by forcing its own laws that often contradict the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

AL-AHRAM continues: Without exaggeration, we can say that the recent punitive measures Israel imposed did more harm to the peace process than the explosions. How can Israel convince the Palestinian people of the seriousness of its peace quest when it prevents 750,000 Palestinian students from attending their lessons freely after the educational process was totally paralyzed, the paper asks.

AL-AHRAM calls on Israel at the end of its editorial to call off all the oppressive measures it adopted in that context so that peace can be saved in accordance with the soul and spirit of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit without denying itself the right to provide for its security needs.

AL-AKHBAR publishes an editorial entitled "Do Not Leave a Fragile Peace Without Support." The editorial says: Now that the commitment to support peace in the Middle East has become a well established principle recognized by scores of world leaders, large and small alike, it is now the duty of these leaders to take an inevitable next step to help the peace process proceed quietly and easily without obstruction.

This step is helping the Palestinian side to stand firm, integrating the steps already taken, and expanding the scope of the areas included in the self-rule agreement. First of all, this calls on the states that promised to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority to honor their commitments and build the infrastructure and the utilities that were destroyed over the years of the Israeli occupation, the paper says. [passage omitted]

Libya

Libya: Al-Qadhdhafi Receives Malian President

AB1203060396 Bamako Radiodiffusion-Television du Mali Radio in French 1945 GMT

[FBIS Translated Text] President Alpha Oumar Konare met his Libyan counterpart, Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi for the second time yesterday evening. They discussed among other things, the situation in northern Mali and that of Malians resident in Libya, and above all technical cooperation between our two countries. From Tripoli, Sory Ibrahim Keita brings us a report on President Konare's two-day visit:

[Begin Keita recording] Once again , President Konare and Al- Qadhdhafi met yesterday evening under a tent for the second time since our arrival in Libya, about 40 km away from Sidra under an isolated and barely lighted tent. The discussions centered on the role of Libya in consolidating peace in northern Mali; Libya's support for the socioeconomic development of Mali; the special attention which Libya intends to give to Malian community resident in that country. With this meeting, President Konare also intended to express gratitude to Libyans who, according to our sources, have honored all its promises concerning the north problem. Meanwhile, there has been no details about the topics discussed between the two leaders as President Konare promised to personally break the news upon his return at the Bamako-Senou Airport.

In his plane bound for Bamako, there are eight Libyan technicians accompanying President Konare. These technicians will assist Mali in the television sector. So, these eight technicians will help improve upon the performance of the Mali Radio and Television Broadcasting Service in line with technical cooperation between Libyans and Malians.

Pending the return trip to Bamako, the presidential delegation continues its visit in Tripoli after the Sidra leg. Among the President's engagements are the audience granted to the Tunisian ambassador to Libya who brought a message and his meeting with the Malian community in Libya. [end recording]

Sudan

Sudan: Opposition Says Government Discussing Expulsion of Hamas

EA1403222696 (Clandestine) Voice of the National Democratic Alliance in Arabic 1715 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha, foreign minister of the [National Islamic] Front party, held intensive meetings on 6 and 7 March at the Foreign Ministry. It included cadres of the Foreign Ministry.

The meetings discussed the need to deport members of the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] movement which made Khartoum its main headquarters. The meetings dealt with the gravity of the situation after the recent explosions [in Israel] and the conference on combating terrorism held in Sharm al-Shaykh, Egypt, on Wednesday, 13 March [passage omitted].

Sudan: Government Says Egypt Trying To Stop Voting in Hala'ib

EA1403185996 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Egyptian regime's forces have moved a large number of military vehicles and equipment to the Hala'ib Province in an attempt to impede the election process there. Badawi al-Khayr Idris, governor of the Red Sea [State], said what the Egyptian regime's forces were doing went against international conventions and laws and basic human rights.

He confirmed that the citizens of Hala'ib, despite the harassments and difficult circumstances they were experiencing as a result of this escalation, had turned out at polling centers. He said Hala'ib Province had registered the highest turnout in the state. He added that the armed forces, despite the provocations of the Egyptian regime, were exercising self-control in order to preserve the blood of the sons of the two countries.

Western Sahara

Western Sahara: Polisario Accuses Morocco of 'Provocative Acts'

LD1403234696 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 2200 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquia El Hamra and Rio de Oro] today condemned Morocco's repeated provocative acts in the Western Sahara. It called on the UN Security Council [UNSC] for action.

A statement from the Saharan Ministry of Information said that at the time when several important efforts have been made at the level of the UNSC to lay a foundation to resume the work of MINURSO [UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara] Identification Committee on a credible and transparent basis, and in order to reach the peace process in the western Sahara, the Moroccan authorities double their provocative acts in the region.

The statement said that on 12 March 1996 two warplanes flew over the region of Bir Lehlu which is under the control of the Polisario Front, and where there is a UN center for military observers.

The Polisario Front called on the UNSC to intervene immediately to make the Moroccan authorities respect the peace plan and to put an end to their provocations in the Western Sahara.

Bahrain

Bahrain: Security Forces on Alert After Restaurant Bombings

NC1503124796 Paris AFP in English 1152 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, March 15 (AFP) - Heavily armed troops sealed off Shiite Moslem areas of Bahrain on Friday [15 March] after two firebomb attacks on restaurants killed seven Bangladeshis and struck fear into the large expatriate community.

Black-uniformed troops from the army's special forces, armed with machine-guns, assault rifles and tear gas guns, were deployed around the Sitra, Jidhaf and Sanabis districts outside Manama.

Soldiers and police were posted on the main roads into these areas and were checking identities looking for suspects.

Bahrain has been hit by arson attacks, bombings and other violence during 15 months of political unrest by Shiites who are calling on the Sunni Moslem-led government to restore the parliament it suspended in 1975.

The government has ignored the demands and implied Iran was involved in the unrest which has struck the archipelago, which is connected to Saudi Arabia by a causeway.

Sixty percent of the local population are Shiites, most of them poor, while 40 percent are from the ruling Sunni community.

It emerged on Friday that a gang of masked men had attacked a Western-style restaurant serving foreigners Wednesday night just hours before an arson attack on an Indian restaurant which killed seven Bangladeshis.

Witnesses said the six assailants armed with iron bars and knives threw Molotov cocktails into the entrance of the restaurant in Jidhaf and tried to stop the people inside from getting out.

A dozen foreigners, most of them Britons, were in the restaurant at the time, but managed to flee along with the staff.

"The attackers kept back frightened passers-by before running off in different directions shouting," a witness said.

However, not along afterwards another gang attacked an Indian restaurant in Sitra, setting fire to the entrances to trap everybody inside the building. Seven Bangladeshis died in the worst single incident since the unrest began.

With tension mounting, the government daily AKHBAR AL-KHALEEJ called Friday on the authorities to take emergency steps.

"The authorities have treated the terrorists humanely without resorting to using tanks and artillery to destroy the villages they come from as in other countries," it said.

The U.S. embassy advised Americans to avoid areas with a heavily Shiite population, and foreigners were shunning public places for fear of attacks.

"We decided to avoid hotels and restaurants and dodgy districts because of the violence," a Western engineer told AFP requesting anonymity.

"It has forced us to change our routine. Instead of going fishing and spending the day on the beach like we usually do on Fridays, we are staying at home or visiting friends," he said.

A Pakistani businessman, who has lived 10 years in Bahrain, said "it has become impossible to live in this tension. The government must put an end to it."

Public buildings and economic sites are under guard and only authorised personnel can enter.

"These attacks are aimed at terrorising the population and damaging Bahrain," an information ministry official said. The criminal investigation department was investigating the arson attacks and looking for the perpetrators.

Bahrain: Opposition Figures Condemn Violence, Blame Government

NC1403195396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1745 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Bahraini opposition figure Dr. Mansur al-Jamri by 'Isam Hasan; place and date not given; from the "News and Reports" feature]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Hasan] International news agencies today reported an explosion in an Indian restaurant in Bahrain. What is the information you received on this explosion?

[Al-Jamri] What we received is what was officially reported on the incident, that seven people were killed when five masked persons attacked a restaurant in Sitrat Wadiyan. They poured gasoline and set the restaurant on fire. This is the report available so far. Naturally, this incident is a continuation of the regrettable and very serious events of the past days. There has been an explosion at the Bank of Bahrain, and the government claimed that one of the perpetrators of this incident was killed, something that is viewed with suspicion by the people. The female students of the Bahrain University have been assaulted. Some security men pulled the veil off the faces of the students, pulled them by their hair out of a bus, and assaulted them. Then came today's regrettable and tragic incident, in which seven members of the Indian community were killed, something which the opposition does not wish to see. The opposition movement has called and continues to call for peaceful action and condemns acts of violence. We believe that the security forces have dragged the country and the political life into a serious era of extreme violence, which is rejected by all parties. We believe that the government has done this to convince the Western and outside world that it is facing a security crisis and terrorism, contrary to the truth, which is that the crisis in Bahrain is political. This crisis stems from the absence of Constitutional rights for the Bahraini people. The opposition continues to denounce any attack against innocent and defenseless people, and condemns in the first place the security forces' attack against innocent people and their violation of people's honor everywhere. This tragic incident today is something that the opposition movement does not call for in any part of the world.

[Hasan] Do I understand from your remarks and reference to the number of incidents that have taken place in Bahrain that you view them all within one context?

[Al-Jamri] When the cycle of violence begins, and the authority officially encourages violence, things get out of hand in various directions. There is oppression and extreme indignation felt by the people for what the security troops are doing. A 40-minute program broadcast on the BBC two days ago featured interviews with the father of the martyr [not further identified], lawyers, and many people, including the foreign minister. The foreign minister was asked why no investigation had been conducted into the murder of Sa'id al-Iskafi. He hesitated first, then said: We do not have torture. When he was pressed for an answer, he declined to give a reason for not conducting an inquiry into what is happening in Bahrain. [passage omitted]

Bahrain: Papers Call For 'Stringent' Measures Against 'Terrorists'

JN1503090596 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0620 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 15 Mar (WAKH) — Bahraini newspapers issued here today deplored the terrorist incident which took place yesterday in a restaurant in Sitrat Wadiyan in which seven people were suffocated and burned to death. They described the incident as criminal.

The newspaper AL-AYYAM says: These saboteurs should not get off scot free for this abominable crime against citizens and residents. These incidents are no longer childish tampering attempts, but premeditated crimes. The newspaper notes: All their attempts to intimidate secure citizens through arson, sabotage, blowing up of public and private property, and sending of threats to those who say no to them have failed. Therefore, they resorted to blowing up people in this homeland and browbeating people so that the external forces that support them will celebrate these disgraceful actions.

In its commentary, AL-AYYAM demands: This big and serious incident should not go by without receiving a quick and deterrent punishment so that citizens and residents will feel safe about their souls, children, and property. The state should take stringent measures against these people who have exceeded limits and believed that the state's civilized treatment of these incidents means inaction and negligence on the part of security agencies.

AL-AYYAM further states: Taking quick, necessary measures to protect society from terrorism and its groups is the quest of all citizens today. All the masks that concealed the ugly face of terrorism, its perpetrators, and supporters have fallen off. We are now facing a situation that does not endure any explanations, theorization, or justification.

Concluding its commentary, the newspaper says: The homeland is on a significant crossroads in its march today vis-a-vis the current situation. In light of this extraordinary situation, all necessary measures should be adopted to preserve the security and safety of the homeland and all citizens and residents living in it. Obviously, quick measures should be taken and extraordinary laws enforced to confront this destruction targeting the homeland.

For its part, the newspaper AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ, commenting on the same topic, says that the ugly crime which took place in Sitrat Wadiyan yesterday cannot be approved by any religion, law, ethics, mind, or logic.

The newspaper wonders: What crime did these seven innocent people, who went out to work to earn their living through lawful means, commit to prompt these monsters to attack them, set fire to the restaurant they were in, and burn them to death? This is an almost unique crime.

It adds: The terrorists lost their mind and humanity as they failed to shake Bahrain's status, smear its reputation, or undermine it security and stability. People disowned them right from the beginning and condemned their disgraceful and cowardly crimes which cannot be justified in any way. Therefore, these terrorists turned into beleaguered monsters. Their main concern is to kill and intimidate the secure citizens and damage the vital interests of the homeland and citizens.

AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ goes on to say: The state has thus far dealt with terrorists in a civilized and human manner. It did not imitate other states which resorted to tanks and artillery to shell villages and quarters. It dealt with the situation on the basis that these terrorists are, in the final analysis, members of its society and that one day they will become sane, observe the homeland's interest, and stop the killing, arson, and destruction. However, these terrorists continued committing lowly and cowardly crimes. They met tolerance with further barbaric violence to such an extent that the country now faces an extraordinary situation that should be dealt with through extraordinary methods.

The paper explains that these methods are too many, well known, and are used by any country facing actions that disrupt its security and stability. It adds that the state should forsake patience and tolerance regarding these monsters, who are stripped of anything related to humanity, and should step up its measures. It asserts that the homeland's interest should be placed above all considerations and on top of the list.

Yemen

Yemen: Sanaa Signs Agreement With Tehran on Oil Concession

MM1403152796 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 14 Mar 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by Naji al-Harazi: "Yemeni Government Decides To Grant Iran Oil Concession"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Sanaa — The Yemeni Council of Ministers yesterday ratified a number of important economic agreements with some states, including a memorandum signed between Sanaa and Tehran under which an Iranian company will participate in oil prospecting operations in one of the land sectors in Yemen. The statement issued by the meeting did not specify the company's name or where prospecting operations will take place.

The council also reviewed two memorandums concerning British Gas' resumption of drilling and prospecting operations on Socotra island. The other memorandum concerns the inclusion of the Hunt-Exxon-Yukong consortium in the $5 billion-natural gas project between Yemen and the French company Total. Yemen signed the deal concerning the extraction of gas in Ma'rib at the beginning of the year. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Kuwaiti Paper Interviews Salih on Arab Ties, Extremism

JN1503065996 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 13 Mar 96

["Text" of interview with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih by unidentified correspondent from the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-WATAN; place and date not given — read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [AL-WATAN] It is regrettable that 'Abdallah al-Ashtal, who was Yemen's permanent representative at the United Nations during the Gulf war and who strongly supported Iraq, is still the UN permanent representative. Has Yemen changed its stand on the UN resolutions and the failure to implement them and is this stand linked with the presence of this representative?

[Salih] If you review the Yemeni statements and stands — the last of which was announced during our meeting with the brother Iraqi culture and information minister — you will find that Yemen has always reiterated that Iraq should comply with the Security Council resolutions related to the Gulf crisis and war and deal positively with these resolutions so that the Iraqi people will be saved from the economic sanctions imposed on them.

[AL-WATAN] In a statement to Aden Television on 5 October 1995, the Yemeni deputy prime minister and foreign minister accused Kuwait of interfering in Yemen's domestic affairs. Is there evidence to prove this claim?

[Salih] I have no knowledge of such a statement. However, some anti-Yemen articles and reports in some Kuwaiti papers make the Yemeni readers believe that Kuwait is interfering in Yemen's domestic affairs. I, however, do not have any information on Kuwait's interference in Yemen's domestic affairs. In general, we want to close this file, turn over the page, and open a new chapter of fraternity, tolerance, and love. This is our desire and we hope that it is also the desire of the Kuwaiti brothers.

[AL-WATAN] How do you assess your relations with your brothers in the Gulf countries? Where have your efforts to reconcile with Kuwait reached? And, would you tell us about the border talks with Saudi Arabia?

[Salih] Our relations with our brothers in the Gulf are good and are developing continuously. Regarding our relations with Kuwait, we have no differences or problems with them. We say that the effects of the Gulf crisis must end. Our hearts are always open to them. Our relations with the brothers in Saudi

Arabia are cordial and developing. The work of the committees, which were formed in accordance with the memo of understanding and which are charged with solving the problem of borders between both countries, is proceeding in a satisfactory way for both sides.

[AL-WATAN] Kuwait announced its stand and set its conditions for the return of its relations with the states, which supported the Iraqi invasion. What is your stand on these conditions?

[Salih] If we stood against Kuwait we would apologize. However, we never stood against Kuwait nor supported the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. One should apologize if he errs, but we did not err. We cannot apologize for something we did not commit. We demonstrated good intentions and a sincere fraternal desire to restore fraternity, clarity, and cordiality to our relations. The ball is now in the court of the brothers in Kuwait. We are ready when they are.

[AL-WATAN] How are your relations with the other Arab countries, particularly Sudan, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria?

[Salih] Our relations with all brothers are excellent. We have no problem with any Arab country.

[AL-WATAN] How do you assess the restoration of Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations?

[Salih] We consider this an excellent step on the path of closing Arab ranks and the gradual restoration of Arab solidarity.

[AL-WATAN] Are there any differences between Yemen and Algeria on the well-known Algerian extremist Abi 'Abd-al-Rahman, who was arrested in Yemen?

[Salih] There are no differences with Algeria. [passage omitted]

[AL-WATAN] Is it correct that Yemen is a hotbed for international terrorism?

[Salih] Yemen is the home of security and faith. It is a secure shelter for every Arab. In Yemen, there is no room at all for terrorism or extremism. Regrettably, such reports are part of the anti-Yemen propaganda leaked to some reporters by the treacherous separatists who said that there are Islamic extremists with the aim of harming Yemen. This is baseless propaganda. Yemen expelled all Islamic extremists, who entered the country in an illegal way during the crisis and war, exploiting the political and party altercations which prevailed then. We do not accept on our land any extremist because we are against extremism and terrorism in all their forms. [passage omitted]

[AL-WATAN] It has been reported that the recent visit to Iran by the Yemeni deputy prime minister aimed at seeking assistance from Iran's experience in using boats that were used in navy guerrilla warfare in the Iraq-Iran war. Will Yemen use such boats to liberate al-Hanish island?

[Salih] The visit to Iran by Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Muhammad Sa'id al-'Attar, the planning minister, and minister of oil and mineral resources, came at the invitation of the brothers in Iran. The talks dealt with cooperation with the brothers in Iran in the field of oil and supplying the Aden Refinery with Iranian oil. In the past, Kuwait used to refine part of its oil in this refinery. God willing, this activity will resume. We did not ask the brothers in Iran for any military expertise or boats. We discussed with them oil and economic cooperation. Your question entails propaganda that will not serve security, stability, or peace in the region. We consider Iran a sisterly neighborly state whose relations with its neighbors and sisters must be good for the sake of security and stability. The Arab and Islamic nation has no interest in antagonizing Iran. Also, Iran will have no interest in antagonizing its brothers in the Arab world. Regardless of what some in the West say about Iran, they have their viewpoint and we have our viewpoint. We are not their employees or their police to be used to antagonize those whom they antagonize. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Documents on Chemical Weapons Said Transferred to Prisons

NC1403155096 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1445 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Sources in the Islamic uprising in Iraq's television [tilifizyun al-intifadah al-islamiyah fi al-'Iraq] report that the ruling regime in Baghdad has transferred thousands of documents on germ and chemical weapons in sealed boxes to prisons countrywide in an attempt to hide them from the international inspectors.

The same sources added that the ruling regime transferred the documents in time to coincide with the UN teams' current inspection campaign. The regime transferred the documents from various buildings housing ministries and government departments to the prisons of Abu Ghurayb, al-Radwaniyah, and al-Malih in Baghdad, the al-'Utayshi detention facility for torture, Hayy al-'Abbasi Prison in Karbala', and other secret prisons to prevent them from falling into the hands of the UN inspectors.

Iraq: New Session With UN Held in New York 13 Mar

JN1403203496 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Iraqi delegation, led by Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, and the UN delegation, led by UN Legal Adviser Hans Corell, held a new session in New York yesterday evening, 13 March, as part of the series of dialogue sessions on the issue of exchanging oil for foodstuffs, medicine, and other basic needs.

Before the expanded evening session, experts from both delegations held additional technical discussions before they were joined by the heads of the two delegations, al-Anbari and Corell.

The IRAQI NEWS AGENCY correspondent in New York learned that al-Anbari met earlier with Ambassador Antonius Etel, Germany's permanent representative to the United Nations, in his capacity as chairman of the Sanctions Committee. Etel told reporters that he met with al-Anbari to follow up on the development of the Iraqi-UN dialogue. He asserted that these talks would not have taken place, if it had not been for the two sides' readiness to reach an agreement. He expected these talks to bear satisfactory results.

Upon the conclusion of yesterday's evening session, the United Nations announced that the two sides will hold another session on 14 March at 1030 New York time [1530 GMT], 1830 Baghdad time. In its announcement, the United Nations said that yesterday the two sides continued to discuss issues that were not resolved in the first round of dialogue, which ended on 19 February.

Iraq: INA Reports on Latest Talks With UN

JN1403204396 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1920 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 14 Mar (INA) — A new session of the dialogue between Iraq and the United Nations on oil for food, medicine, and other necessities for the Iraqi people was held this morning, New York time. The session lasted two hours.

An INA correspondent in New York learned that the two delegations agreed to hold a general session at 1400 New York local time [1900 GMT] today, around midnight Baghdad time.

Iraq: Al-Anbari Reports 'Some Progress' in Talks With UN

JN1503114696 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1000 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] New York, 15 Mar (INA)— The Iraqi delegation, led by Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, and the UN General Secretariat delegation, led by Legal Adviser Hans Corell held a general session last night. All members of the two delegations took part in the meeting. Afterward, the heads of the two delegations held a meeting that was confined to the two men. The meetings were held within the official technical discussions on trading oil for food and medical supplies for the Iraqi people.

These discussions are being held within the framework of the second round of the dialogue between Iraq and the General Secretariat. The first round of talks was held last February.

Dr. al-Anbari told an INA correspondent that he handed the UN delegation a copy of the Iraqi-Turkish oil cooperation protocol on the operation of the dual pipeline to export Iraqi oil.

The head of the Iraqi delegation added that some progress was achieved during the second round in terms of agreeing on some points that were left pending from the first round.

The Iraqi and UN delegations will hold another session at 1700 today, 0100 Baghdad time, to continue the dialogue.

In other statements to reporters, Dr. al-Anbari said that the second round of talks dealt with all relevant issues, including the distribution and organization of basic needs, oil affairs, and other issues.

Iraq: Envoy Rejects Mechanisms for Implementation of Resolution

LD1403142896 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1400 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Iraqi diplomatic sources in Algeria reported today that Baghdad, which has today become supportive of an agreement on UN Resolution No. 986 over the oil-for-food formula, rejected some of the mechanisms for the implementation of this formula.

In a statement to an Algerian news agency, the Iraqi ambassador said that his country has expressed reservations over three points connected with the implementation of Resolution No. 986.

The Iraqi ambassador added that an agreement could be reached with the United Nations.

Iraq: 4 Opposition Trends Invited to Damascus Meeting

MM1503092796 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 14 Mar 96 p 4

[Report by Ibrahim al-Humaydi in Damascus: "Damascus Preparing To Hold 'Consultation Meeting' Between Iraqi Opposition Sides"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Iraqi oppositionists have told AL-HAYAH that invitations to attend a meeting of the opposition in Damascus beginning 25 March 1996 have been sent to 11 senior officials in the four (nationalist, Islamic, Kurdish, and democratic) trends and that the invitations, made in conjunction with the Nationalist and Islamic Action Coordination Committee and the Ba'th Party National Command, did not include Major General Wafiq al-Samara'i, former Iraqi military intelligence chief; Mish'an al-Juburi, leader of the Homeland Party; Salah 'Umar al-'Ali, leader of the National Accord Movement; and Major General Hasan al-Naqib, member of the Executive Council of the Unified Iraqi National Congress.

Mahdi al-'Ubaydi, official in charge of external affairs in the Nationalist and Islamic Action Coordination Committee, told AL-HAYAH that invitations have been sent to political figures for a consultation meeting on 25 March in Damascus, following recent Syrian-Iranian talks in Damascus. He added that the meeting will lead to "a broadened meeting or conference to include the others," explaining that the invitations, which were issued after coordination between the committee and the Ba'th Party National Command, were sent to 11 senior opposition officials. Sources close to the "nationalist trend" told AL-HAYAH that they expect al-Samara'i, al-Juburi, and al-'Ali to attend as "a fifth trend," adding that they will accept "invitations issued by senior Syrian officials."

The invitations to the preliminary meeting included representatives and leaders of the main trends. The nationalist trend is represented by four people from the Nationalist Action Coordination Committee "to be selected by the committee" and another four from the Islamic tendency, namely Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq; Shaykh Muhammad al-Alusi, leader of the Islamic Bloc; Ayatullah Taqiyy al-Mudarrasi, leader of the Islamic Action Organization; and Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi al-Asfi, leader of the Islamic Call Party. Hamid Majid, leader of the Communist Party, was invited among representatives of the democratic trend. Invitations were also sent to Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and Mas'ud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, following the talks held by a delegation of that party's political bureau led by Sami 'Abd-al-Rahman with Syrian officials and Mohammad Aqamohammadi, official in charge of Iraqi affairs in the Iranian National Security Council. Al-'Ubaydi said that the plan to be discussed by the oppositionists will focus on two points, namely "to draw up a plan to end Saddam Husayn's regime, and secondly for national forces to adopt a clear position on King Husayn's proposal for a federation and the partitioning of Iraq." Islamic Action Organization representative Ja'far Muhammad said that the meeting is aimed at providing a mechanism for action to topple the regime and provide an alternative.

Maj. Gen. al-Naqib told AL-HAYAH that, up until yesterday evening, he had still not received "any invitation" and "no doubt I shall accept it, if I am invited." So far, the attendance of the representatives of the patriotic trend, al-Samara'i and al-Juburi, has not been confirmed.

Al-Juburi told AL-HAYAH that he met two days ago with 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, the Ba'th Party's assistant secretary general, and "was given to understand that the opposition's meeting will be held between the four trends, the nationalist, Islamist, Kurdish and democratic (communist)" and added that he himself, al-Samara'i, and al-'Ali "represent a patriotic trend and we will not attend the meeting because we will not accept participation under the banner of any of the four trends invited."

Iraq: KDP Forces Reportedly Attack PUK Peshmerga Posts

NC1403155496 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1500 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] forces are continuing their violation of the cease-fire agreement declared between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] and the KDP.

KDP forces directed machine-gun fire at PUK peshmerga forces on the (Kapki-Sutay) axis and the (Wanka) village yesterday and the day before. Meanwhile, KDP forces stationed on the (Kapki-Shilana) Axis fired at Kurdistan Peshmerga positions, using mortars and machine guns. Four peshmerga personnel suffered minor wounds as a result.

Iraq: Talabani Followers Reportedly Seize Food Donations to Kurds

JN1503130696 Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 17 Feb 96 p 1

["Exclusive Report by AL-JUMHURIYAH"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Irbil — Kurdish sources said that Jalal Talabani's followers seized trucks carrying foodstuffs and unloaded them into their own stores. These sources added that the trucks, which carried leader President Saddam Husayn's generous food donations, were seen entering Irbil before being commandeered by Talabani's followers within the sight and hearing of so-called humanitarian organizations operating in the north.

The same sources affirmed that the members of the these humanitarian organizations did not oppose this piracy, which was aimed at starving the Kurdish people, nor did they notify their headoffices about the incident, despite the fact that it took place two weeks ago and the citizens are still inquiring about the fate of the provisions. Kurdish citizens said that the provisions would most likely end up in the black market since agent Talabani, who they said is a great speculator, was badly hit by the large drop in the dollar exchange rate.

Iraq: Paper Reports on Electricity Projects in Al-Najaf, Diyala

JN1503130296 Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 17 Feb 96 pp 1, 2

[Report by Maryam al-'Atiyah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad — Teams of the State Enterprise for Power Distribution in the Central Region, a unit of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals, have completed their work on three new vital projects, which are aimed at strengthening the electricity systems in Al-Najaf and Diyala Governorates. Making this announcement, Director General Layth Razzuqi said that the projects include a 33-kilovolt power line to supply al-Manadhirah Station at a capacity of 2 X 10 MVA and reduce the load on al-Najaf gas-powered station. The project involved setting up a 17.5-kilometer and 152 pylons at a cost of 15 million dinars.

The director general added that the enterprise also completed an infrastructure project in the region between al-Husayniyah and al-'Abbasiyah in Karbala' Governorate, where the cost of the electricity work only amounted to 34 million dinars. He said that the enterprise also set up a 33-kilovolt power line to relieve the pressure in Bahraz region, Diyala Governorate. The project, he added, involved the use of concrete poles to supply power to a mobile station serving villages within the Diyala Governorate.

Israel: Peres Lauds Clinton as One of World's 'Most Wonderful People'

TA1403155196 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1431 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Statement by Prime Minister Shim'on Peres while introducing U.S. President Bill Clinton at the Center for the Performing Arts in Tel Aviv — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] Your Excellency, President Bill Clinton; Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo; Israeli Student Councils Chairman Li'at; girls and boys: You will soon hear one of the most wonderful people in the world, one of the greatest Presidents the United States has ever elected. I am telling you in advance: I know some of you have been wondering how one becomes President. I will tell you this about Bill Clinton: He was a good student; he was an A student. [laughter] Therefore, before you become great presidents you must be excellent students, because apparently it is impossible to get ahead without that. [laughter, applause]

He is a man with a most sensitive heart, an exceptional thinker, someone sympathetic to Israel, a lover of peace. Something remarkable happened to him after he became President: The world changed radically, the Soviet Union collapsed, and, in fact, the entire world came to realize that borders do not really matter; even territories and natural resources matter less. Today everything depends on expertise, science, and technology. What man has inside his brain matters more than what he has under his feet.

You are studying history. When we read history, we see it is all wars, blood, butchery, and murder. He is the first President who has tried to change the historical order, to change a world of blood into a world of peace. He focuses on the Middle East because this is the arena of one of the most complex conflicts in history. In the past four years, we have been trying with all our might — under the leadership of the late Yitzhaq Rabin on our side at first and of President Clinton — to change this region from a region dominated by hatred, suspicion, cynicism, and confusion into a region of understanding and hope. We have been turning over the earth and when earth is overturned, mines are sometimes uncovered and people are killed. And yet, we remain determined.

He comes here each time there is a ray of hope, each time there is a tearful eye. We were in touch from the first bombing in Jerusalem, and he granted us everything we asked. He asked: What can I do? I told him: You have your election campaign; you must be busy. He told me: Shim'on, I have all the time in the world; just tell me what I can do. We asked for explosive-detecting equipment, and it arrived within 12 hours. He has come here.

I want to share with you one impression from Sharm al-Shaykh. Some 30 or 40 of the world's most important leaders, including 13 Arab ones, convened, and it was an unprecedented picture. They all voiced their wish to combat terror and their hope for peace. And then Bill Clinton spoke. He was not addressing Jews in Eretz Yisra'el; he was addressing Arab delegations on Egyptian soil. He said: My heart is with the citizens of Israel, with their suffering and grief. I have never seen anything like it. I saw a new world before me. [applause]

I have one edge on Bill Clinton: I am older. Yet we share one thing: Believe me, everything he does, and everything I do in my own way, is for your sake only. Only. [applause] We do not want you to live through everything your parents have experienced, through everything your predecessors have experienced. We cannot change the past, only the future. Only in that is any investment worth making. That is really the true content of political life.

The man about to address you is the President of the largest superpower — one which has religious values, one which has Bible pages flowing in its political veins. I would say in one word: He is a man trying to change the future from blood to hope. I give you Bill Clinton. [applause]

Israel: Netanyahu Comments on Meeting With Clinton

TA1403125296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1120 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Telephone interview with Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu by Yoram Ronen; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ronen] Good day to you, Binyamin Netanyahu. Tell us first please what the main points of your meeting with President Clinton were.

[Netanyahu] Look, it was a very good and very warm meeting. Two basic points were made, one by President Clinton, to the effect that he will work and cooperate with every government that is set up in Israel, including a government led by the Likud. For my part, I made the same clarification. Relations between Israel and the United States are so deep and so friendly that they are primarily relations between nations rather than governments. Second, he asked me to bring my influence to bear in the United States and the West in order to help consolidate public opinion for a much firmer policy against terrorists in the West. I gave him my book, telling him this is exactly what I wrote about, and also noted his special legislation, his law against terror, as an example of the kind of policy that is worth adopting. He promised me he would read the book. It is the second time that I have given books to U.S. Presidents on the terror issue.

[Ronen] The first book you gave to President Bush.

[Netanyahu] No, to President Reagan. At the time this helped consolidate the counterterror war of the 1980's. Third, and no less important, I made it clear that we would continue a peace policy in order to achieve peace that will not only bring about security but also gain wide public support in Israel. We should achieve peace primarily by strengthening our internal and external security, but no less important, by harnessing the support of large sectors in Israel. I told Clinton it is my belief that a Likud-led government would achieve this goal.

[Ronen] You said that President Clinton asked you to help build public opinion in the struggle against terrorism. How is he expecting you to do that? Does he want you to appear in various places and talk about the importance of this struggle?

[Netanyahu] Among other things. My impression was that our concept of the necessary action in the West is identical. In other words, there is an important international component to the war against terror. Our problem here is less of an intrnational nature. It has a local component, mainly from Gaza, inside Gaza, and what is necessary to be done there, and I made my position clear on this, saying that we need freedom of action and pressure rather than hugs.

[Ronen] Did President Clinton support your position?

[Netanyahu] He listened, he listened very attentively, I must say. Still, his main appeal concerned the policy he is trying to get the Western countries, including the United States, to implement, a policy against the fundamentalist terror pockets which have established themselves in the West over the last 10 years, in fact since the end of the Afghanistan war. All veterans of that war, including Shiites but mainly Sunnis, guided by both Iran and Sudan, live in the West and wage terror against the West from the West, and it is necessary to change the policy and possibly also the legislation against the use they make of the freedom they enjoy to harm free countries. I told him this is precisely the thesis I was advocating in my book and which I express, as I am doing right now in fact.

[Ronen] Last question Binyamin Netanyahu, if you had feared that Clinton's visit would somehow aid Shim'on Peres in the election campaign, did this fear dissipate following your talk?

[Netanyahu] I did not and do not have such a fear now. I think I said, and let me repeat, that President Clinton is a welcome guest in Israel anytime. Moreover, I think it became absolutely clear in the course of the meeting that we are partners in the search for peace. We did so in the Likud governments, in Camp David and in Madrid, and will do so in the future as well, in cooperation with the U.S. President, whoever he may be. Anybody who is elected prime minister of Israel, and I intend to lead the next government, will pursue the peace path in cooperation with the United States, a new path which will restore security but which is surely aimed at the goal we all desire, peace. There is no conflict between us and the United States on this matter. In my opinion, we have the very deep cooperation which exists between democratic, peace-seeking countries.

[Ronen] Binyamin Netanyahu, chairman of the Likud, thank you very much.

Israel: 'Sweeping, Warm, Unconditional' Clinton Support Seen

TA1403145196 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 14 Mar 96 pp 1, 31

[Commentary by Nahum Barne'a: "Clinton, the Last Zionist"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The masses of Arabs watching the spectacle in Sharm al-Shaykh could not believe their eyes. Israel turned up at the summit as a tragedy-stricken country. The wave of terror had harmed the sense of security of its citizens and their support for the peace process. It had paid a high toll in blood.

Other countries have been struck by terror, some of them having paid no smaller a price. But not one of them was lavished with the sweeping, warm, and unconditional support that Israel received from the U.S. President. For Israel, this is a big consolation. For the Arabs, this is an unbearable show of force.

Israel has come a long way since Ben-Gurion pleaded (in vain) for an invitation to the White House. Shim'on Peres, who was Ben-Gurion's aide, recalled those lean years yesterday. Israel has experienced both cold and warmth in the White House. Bill Clinton is the first President who does not feel duty-bound to be "balanced" in his attitude toward Israel. His identification with it is 100 percent. It was only thanks to the nonbalance of Clinton and his men that a selection of world bigwigs, including some prominent Arab leaders, landed in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday.

It wasn't by chance that Clinton chose an Arab country and the presence of Arab state leaders to tell Israel: You are not alone. Clinton's identification with Israel's distress is so complete that yesterday he even publicly defended the decision, which the administration does not entirely approve of, to tighten the closure on Gaza and the West Bank towns. "It is a step against terror and for security," he said. Jim Baker would have swallowed his tongue before uttering such words.

Clinton will go to Mount Herzl today. This will have been his second visit to this cemetery in less than five months. It is doubtful that he visits U.S. military cemeteries that often.

Of course, the Americans have an interest, not just tears, in this story. Clinton is in the midst of an election campaign. Most of the Jewish vote is in his pocket. Jewish donations, which play a decisive role in election campaigns, is an issue worth promoting.

In addition to that, Clinton and his administration have a big stake in the peace process. The failure of the process would be their failure. The way they see it, the United States must not allow the Middle East to once again become a center of hostility. If terror threatens the future of the process, then it must be fought. If a change of government in Israel threatens the future of the process, then the Peres government must be helped out, albeit cautiously.

Clinton administration officials are very familiar with Israel. They know that expressions of sympathy on the part of a U.S. President do not harm Israeli prime ministers. Israelis zealously cherish their independence, until it comes to warm words from a U.S. President.

Peres regards the U.S. mobilization for Israel in the wake of the wave of terror as "a step up" in relations between the two countries. Not only Clinton supports Israel with all his heart. The Republicans, who control both houses of Congress, also give Israel their full support. An opportunity has emerged here, and it would be a shame to waste it. Therefore, Peres is seeking a political-security memorandum of understanding (often called "a defense pact") with the United States which will once and for all formalize the closeness between the two countries.

He believes he will persuade Clinton to sign a pact that will not harm Israel's nuclear ability. Israeli Governments have always thought in terms of either a pact or Dimona. Peres believes he will be able to hold both ends of the stick.

The massive U.S. support for Israel enhances its deterrence vis-a-vis friend and foe in the Arab world. It is good for the economy; it is soft to the touch. Of course, therein also lies its weakness. It feels so cozy under the U.S. blanket that we might lose the charm of our independence.

Israel: Clinton's Identification With Israelis 'Rare, Wonderful'

TA1503120596 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 pp 1, 9

[Commentary by Sever Plotzker: "Thank You, Friend"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday, Israeli schoolchildren asked U.S. President Bill Clinton what the necessary qualities for leadership are. After thinking it over, Clinton replied that three attributes are required.

— First of all, education. In order to know a lot, one must first learn a lot. The world is a very complicated place, and without a broad range of knowledge, one cannot gain a sufficient grasp on reality in order to lead others.

— The second, knowing people. Clinton explained to the schoolchildren that to be suited for leadership, one must know and understand people who are different from you. People from other backgrounds and social classes. People whose customs differ from yours and ours. One must love other people.

— Third, the ability to express and defend your opinions. Not to back down. To adhere to your beliefs with all your might, even if they are unpopular. To seek and exploit every opportunity to voice your positions.

These were the leadership qualities Clinton enumerated to the Israeli youths. He possesses all three of them. He demonstrated them one by one during his visit to Israel this week.

Clinton displayed a profound and extraordinary scope of knowledge with regard to Israeli, Jewish, and Middle Eastern affairs. He was familiar with the smallest details about the region. It was clear that he had studied us and our situation, as well as our difficulties and the ways to resolve them. Never before has any world leader showered the Israeli public with so much teary-eyed love, emotion, and sincerity. Bill Clinton's identification with us, people so different from him in appearance and history, is a rare and wonderful thing.

Finally, Clinton gave us a lesson in how to firmly defend one's opinions. While organizing the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, he had to personally telephone many world leaders, especially in the Middle East. He was forced to persuade them and fire their imagination. Clinton violated many mores of international conduct here, ignored diplomatic traditions, cut through the red tape, and almost forcibly brought everyone to an international demonstration of rage against terrorism and identification with its victims. With our victims.

Thank you, Bill Clinton, President of peace. Thank you, friend.

Israel: Baraq, Peres Comment After Talks With Christopher

TA1503110796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0905 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The United States will send sophisticated counterterrorism equipment to Israel in the very near future. This comes in addition to the equipment already received here after the 4 March Dizengoff Center terrorist attack. This was disclosed following this morning's meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq. Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports:

[Begin recording] [Shahar] The meeting between Secretary of State Christopher and Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq was held in two forums. Major General Dani Yatom, the prime minister's military secretary, briefed the participants in the meeting of the expanded forum, which included among others Dennis Ross, U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk, and CIA Director John Deutch. Maj. Gen. Yatom briefed the participants on the understandings reached yesterday between the U.S. and Israeli teams with regard to the equipment required by Israel and the goals of the bilateral agreement slated to be signed by the United States and Israel during Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' visit to Washington next month.

[Baraq] First of all we agreed on a series of issues that will be immediately implemented. The Americans have equipment that we urgently need in order to achieve greater efficiency in the battle against terrorism, especially with regard to the smuggling of explosives and several other fields. We agreed that a supreme effort would be made to sign a U.S.-Israeli counterterrorism agreement in the course of the prime minister's visit to the United States. It was also agreed upon to continue working together in the spirit of the Sharm al-Shaykh declaration with the aim of forming a working group within weeks in order to start implementing the recommendations reached at the summit.

[Shahar] It should be emphasized that the equipment scheduled to be sent to Israel comes in addition to the equipment already received here after the Dizengoff Center bombing.

At the meeting of the limited forum, which included Foreign Ministry Director General Uri Savir and Foreign Ministry legal adviser Yo'el Singer, the participants focused on policy issues and legislation. Syria and Hizballah were the main issues on the agenda.

[Baraq] I do not think that stating conditions is good in politics; it is clear to the Syrians, however, that at such a time we would expect to hear a clear condemnation of terrorism and see actions taken against it. We will determine our positions according to what the Syrians do.

[Shahar] Itamar Rabinovich, Israeli ambassador to Washington, stressed that Israel was not making the resumption of the talks with Syria conditional on Damascus' condemning terrorism.

[Rabinovich] In principle, we want to continue the negotiations with Syria. We would like to see the obstacles on this path removed. We definitely expect the Syrians to issue some statement and take some kind of action with regard to the issue of terrorism. We are not presenting any conditions. The situation is a bit complicated but that is how it is. [end recording]

[Later on in the same newsreel, political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports on today's meeting between Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Secretary of State Christopher, noting that "the meeting was basically devoted to fleshing out the agreements with regard to the war against terrorism, and an impressive series of decisions was reached on this matter." In a recorded passage, Prime Minister Peres replies to Raz's question about the tension along Israel's northern border. Peres says: "There is no doubt that Hizballah made a supreme effort to disrupt the Sharm al-Shaykh summit in order to belatedly detract from its value and importance. We will draw the appropriate conclusions. Clearly, I will not reveal any details. Hizballah, however, is an organization with political as well as operational intentions, and we have decided not to dance to their tune. We will be the ones to decide on the necessary measures to deal with their provocations." When asked whether Syria was behind the Hizballah attacks, Peres "explicitly states that if it wanted to, Syria could prevent most of the Hizballah attacks. Israel has submitted its protests on this matter to the Americans." Raz explains that Secretary of State Christopher and CIA Director John Deutch have remained in Israel in order to organize the delivery of "approximately $50 million worth of U.S. equipment to Israel within a relatively short time." Raz goes on to note that "most of this equipment is bomb-detection equipment and means to combat suicide terrorists and smuggling attempts. Counterterrorism units will also hold joint training exercises, and joint research and development plans will be formulated. They are also talking about regional coordination between intelligence services in order to combat terrorism."]

Israel: Israeli Demands for Defense Pact With U.S. Listed

TA1503092296 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 pp A1, A14

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Defense Ministry proposes that the defense pact between the United States and Israel include a clear U.S. commitment not to cut military aid to Israel and to preserve its real-term value at $1.8 billion a year on a long-term basis.

Shim'on Peres, the prime minister and defense minister, early this week directed Defense Ministry Director General David 'Ivri to submit to him a detailed list of Israel's demands in anticipation of the beginning of the discussions on consolidating a defense pact with the United States.

The document, described as "a strategic cooperation and mutual defense pact between the United States and Israel," was written by Yequti'el Mor, director of the Defense Ministry Foreign Affairs Division. It includes requests for U.S. political commitments and security guarantees, as well as detailed demands for the supply of weapons and the financing of joint development projects.

Among the demands of the defense establishment are the following:

— The United States will provide Israel emergency aid in case of a serious threat to its security.

— The United States will help Israel in case countries in the region attain nuclear weapons.

— Financing the Homa antimissile defense system, including the financing of the Arrow antimissile missile. Cooperation in deterrence, defense, and the interception of surface-to-surface missiles.

— Establishing a ground station in Israel for receiving high-resolution photos from U.S. spy satellites.

— Additional supplies of U.S. Black Hawk helicopters.

— Continuing the development of the Nautilus laser system for intercepting Katyusha rockets and low-flying helicopters.

— Expanding intelligence cooperation.

— Counterterror cooperation in accordance with the agreement announced by U.S. President Bill Clinton in Jerusalem yesterday. [passage omitted]

Israel: Poll Shows Peacemakers Summit Puts Peres Back in Lead

TA1503121996 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p 1

[Gallup Institute poll]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: If the elections were held today, for whom would you vote as prime minister?

Answer: Shim'on Peres — 44 percent; Binyamin Netanyahu — 41 percent; undecided — 15 percent.

Question: If the Knesset elections were held today, what party would you vote for? [figures represent number of Knesset seats; figures in parentheses represent seats in current Knesset]

Answer: Labor — 45 (44); Likud-Tzomet-Gesher — 39 (40); Meretz — 4 (12); SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] — 4 (6); Moledet — 2 (3); United Torah Jewry — 4-5 (4); NRP [National Religious Party] — 4-5 (6); Arabs — 5-6 (5); the Third Way — 2-3; new immigrants — 3; undecided/others — 4.

The poll was conducted on 13 March, during the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, among 570 people who constitute a representative sample of the adult Jewish population. Maximal margin of error is approximately 4 percent.

Israel: Poll Gives Peres 50% of Vote

TA1503124996 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p 9

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Dahaf Institute under the management of Dr. Mina Tzemah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections for prime minister held today and Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu the candidates, for whom would you vote? (figures in brackets are the results of last week's poll)

Answers: Shim'on Peres — 50 percent (46); Binyamin Netanyahu 47 percent (49); will not vote — 3 percent.

Question: Were the Knesset elections held today, for which list would you vote? (figures in brackets are the results of last week's poll) [figures represent number of Knesset seats]:

List	Poll Results	Current situation
Labor	42 (43)	44
Likud-Tzomet-Gesher	42 (43)	40
Meretz	6 (5)	12

List	Poll Results	Current situation
Moledet	3 (2)	3
National Religious Party	5 (5)	6
United Torah Jewry	4 (4)	4
SHAS	4 (4)	6
HADASH-ADP-al-Tibi's list	7 (7)	5 (No al-Tibi)
The Third Way	3 (3)	
Immigrants party	4 (4)	-
Total	120 120	120

The poll was conducted on 12 and 13 March and covered 508 respondents constituting a representative sample of the entire adult Israeli population. Margin of error is 4 percent.

[Key to abbreviations: SHAS, Torah Observing Sephardim; HADASH, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality; ADP, Arab Democratic Party]

Israel: Peres Envoy Delivers 'Ultimatum' to 'Arafat on Dayf Arrest

TA1403151596 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 14 Mar 96 p 9

[Report by Roni Shaqed]

[FBIS Translated Text] Reserves General Shlomo Gazit, a former intelligence chief, is currently serving as an envoy to the PLO leader on behalf of Prime Minister Shim'on Peres. Gazit has met with 'Arafat three times since the first bus bombing in Jerusalem and informed him that Israel's condition for restoring normal relations with the Palestinian Authority [PA] is the arrest of Muhammad Dayf, the most wanted man in the territories, as well as the heads of the military arm of 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam.

The first meeting between Gazit and 'Arafat took place four days ago, after the date for the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was set. The message conveyed to the PA chairman, actually an ultimatum, was: "As long as you have not arrested Dayf, the person responsible for most of the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Israel in the last two years, you have done nothing as far as we are concerned." The arrest of Hasan Salamah, the terrorist who handled the bus bombers in Jerusalem and who has been hiding in Ramallah, was also mentioned in the same breath.

Israeli sources said the pressure on 'Arafat is real and even went as far as calling it "humiliating," as they had no choice but to use very categorical language.

In the wake of this ultimatum, 'Arafat launched a series of mass arrests among Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] members, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Several leaders of Hamas' military arm, led by Dayf's deputy 'Abd-al-Fattah Sutari, were arrested in this context. After negotiations, he turned himself in together with two PA friends.

An attempt to negotiate a surrender was also made with Dayf, and he was even given the option of fleeing to Egypt, but he turned down the offer.

PA sources said they hope that in the coming days they will manage to lay their hands on Dayf and Salamah. "We know that Salamah is in Ramallah, and we have been conducting investigations and arrests in order to get to him," they said.

Israel: IDF Moves Against Hamas in 'Aqqabah, Lifts Curfew on Rafat

TA1403172896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1700 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] IDF [Israel Defense Forces] troops operated against Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] activists in the village of 'Aqqabah in the Janin District this morning. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that they arrested five men suspected of engaging in hostile activities and seized seditious material.

The house of the terrorist Yahya 'Ayyash in the village of Rafat in Samaria was blown up this afternoon. The curfew that was clamped on the village prior to the demolition has been lifted. Our correspondent Dani Zaqen reports that the house was destroyed with two explosions using 20 kg of dynamite. The demolition experts took extra care in view of the damage caused to neighboring houses last week when a terrorist's house was blown up in the village of Burqa.

Israel: 'Temporary' Lifting of Travel Ban Between Palestinian Towns

TA1503050996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The temporary lifting of the ban on travel between Palestinian towns and villages on the West Bank will go into effect this morning. The closure was lifted at 0600 [0300 GMT] until 1600 this afternoon. The general closure which bars the entry of Palestinians into Israel remains in force.

A Qol Yisra'el reporter adds that Israeli defense officials say that the closure will be further eased next week.

Meanwhile, the police reported arresting about 500 Palestinians who illegally entered Israel this week despite the closure. Sixty-nine Jewish employers were fined for employing Palestinian workers illegally. The Knesset yesterday passed legislation which imposes heavy fines on those who employ Palestinians illegally or allow them to remain in Israel overnight without permission.

The Qarni crossing point into the Gaza Strip, which is used for the transfer of goods, will be opened again today.

Israeli army forces on the West Bank continued to make arrests overnight of suspected Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad members. Five people were arrested in Hebron and Janin. Israeli forces were also active in villages in the Sabastiyah and Bethlehem areas. A Qol Yisra'el reporter says that in the past few weeks, the Israeli Army has arrested hundreds of Islamic Jihad suspects.

Israel: Army Sources See Closure in Force Until After Elections

TA1503120796 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p 6

[Report by Roni Shaqed]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Yesterday, defense establishment sources expressed the assessment that the closure on the territories will not be lifted before the Israeli elections. The sources nevertheless stressed that they will ease the closure in order to alleviate the pressure on the Palestinian populace.

The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is in favor of a prolonged closure. "As far as we are concerned, the Palestinians will receive no more concessions regarding the closure. If have to balance the welfare of the Gaza Strip residents against the lives of people in Tel Aviv, then we care more about the latter," officials at the IDF Southern Command said yesterday.

Defense establishment sources added: "The IDF has lost its faith in 'Arafat, and this is a very bad feeling. He will have to work very hard in order to regain our trust and convince us that he is indeed taking serious steps against terrorism. He must start off by arresting Muhammad Dayf and Husayn Salamah."

Meanwhile, while pressuring the Palestinian Authority [PA], Israel is slightly easing the pressure on the Palestinian residents. Starting this morning, travel will be permitted between villages and towns on the West Bank. Additional restrictions will be lifted from the beginning of next week, mainly with regard to importing basic commodities and raw materials for industry into the territories. The Palestinians will also be permitted to export flowers to Europe through Egypt. The defense establishment also hopes that the donor countries will transfer funds to the PA in order to alleviate the Palestinians' distress. [passage omitted]

Israel: Protest Filed as PA 'Negligence' Leaves Gaza Closed

TA1503122896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Today, Israel filed an official protest with the Palestinian Authority [PA] over the fact that the Qarni crossing from the Gaza Strip was left closed today.

Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that Major General Oren Shahor, coordinator of government activities in the territories, spoke on the phone with PA official Jamil al-Tarifi and protested the fact that the Palestinians did not open the crossing today due to negligence on their part. This neglectful conduct harms the Palestinian residents, although Israel is trying to help them given the current security restrictions, Shahor said.

Israel: 'Tense' Northern Border on Alert After Security Zone Attack

TA1503045296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0400 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The northern border area is reported tense. A Qol Yisra'el reporter says a state of alert has been declared in the area. This follows yesterday's incident in south Lebanon in which eight Israeli soldiers were wounded in an attack by Hizballah gunmen in the eastern sector of the security zone. [passage omitted]

Israel: Counterterror Command Prepares Operative Recommendations

TA1503095596 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p A6

[Report by Eytan Rabin]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Supreme Counterterror Command headed by Shin Bet chief 'Ami Ayalon has ended its work and is slated to submit its findings and recommendations to Prime Minister Shim'on Peres.

Over the last two weeks the command convened several times, and differences of opinion occasionally surfaced regarding the necessary modus operandi. The recommendations, however, were received unanimously.

Among the most significant recommendations to be submitted to Peres are a recommendation to start deporting Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] activists and their families. A source in the command told HA'ARETZ that the command is not talking of mass deportations, rather of deportations on an individual basis. Peres will also be advised to confiscate the possessions of suicide terrorists and their families, to continue the sealing-off and demolition of homes, and to pursue the administrative detentions. The command also recommends an increase in intelligence operations along the dividing line and permission to operate in Area A — which is under Palestinian control — when necessary.

The command also recommends that additional budgets be provided to the Shin Bet and the Army and Police intelligence bodies in order to facilitate their operations. It is also recommended that the legal process required for sealing-off and demolishing buildings and for deportations be shortened.

The command also decided to expand the dividing line on the basis of Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal's separation plan. The defense establishment is preparing to send forces to the towns along the dividing line within the framework of the separation plan. Special funds will be transferred to the police and army for that purpose. At the same time, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is continuing to construct the fence between Qalqilyah and Tulkarm. [passage omitted]

Israel: U.S. Charges on Technology Transfers to China Denied

TA1503122496 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew 15 Mar 96 p 1

[Report by Arye Arad]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The United States has officially accused Israel of transferring U.S. technology used for the Lavi project to the PRC Chengdu F-10. Israel and China have denied the U.S. charges.

The charges are included in a report prepared by U.S. Navy Intelligence on naval warfare threats around the world. Claims have been made in the past that Israel is transferring Lavi technologies to China, but this is the first time such a charge has been made officially.

The U.S. Navy report says that the present PRC planes are extremely simple and of limited combat effectiveness, adding that the PRC aviation industries "have obtained from Israel first-rate U.S. technology used for the Lavi project and perhaps surface-to-air missile technology as well." [passage omitted]

Jordan: Al-Kabariti Says Baghdad Embassy Staffing Not To Be Reduced

JN1503122196 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 16-22 Mar 96 p 2

[FBIS Translated Text] In an exclusive statement to SHIHAN, Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti said: Jordan will not reduce the size of diplomatic representation between Amman and Baghdad. Al-Kabariti said that the government is not considering reducing diplomatic missions in any way, adding that the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad and the Iraqi Embassy in Amman will maintain the size of their current representation. Al-Kabariti said that there are no contacts with the Iraqi opposition factions.

Al-Kabariti also noted that Jordan would not take part in any military actions which would be launched from any Arab country against another Arab country and that Jordan would not allow any aggressive act against any Arab country, including Iraq.

Speaking about the F-16 planes and their flying over southern Iraq, al-Kabariti said: The U.S. planes, which fly over southern Iraq from the Gulf states, from aircraft carriers, and through Jordan, will fly over southern Iraq for two months during the period of the joint military exercises between the Jordanian and U.S. Forces. The mission of these planes will end with the end of the training, the prime minister said.

Jordan: AFP Reports No Official Complaint Lodged With UN on Iraqi Shipment

JN1503114196 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 15 Mar 96 pp 1, 21

[Report by Yahya al-Juju]

[FBIS Translated Text] Answering a question from AL-DUSTUR on the seizure by Customs' officials of six boxes containing spare parts for military planes shipped from Poland to Iraq last week, Information Minister Dr. Marwan al-Mu'ashshir said that the government handed over the entire file pertaining to the shipment to the prosecutor general.

AFP cited a UN spokesman in New York as saying: Jordan did not lodge any official complaint with the United Nations on a possible violation of the arms embargo against Iraq. The spokesman added that the natural procedure Amman should take in this case is to contact the UN Sanctions Committee in the event Jordan suspects that equipment passing through its territory and which is officially allocated for the Iraqi Agriculture Ministry will be transferred to the Iraqi army in violation of the embargo against Iraq. He added: "Amman has so far has not taken any measure of this sort."

Jordan: Authorities Reportedly Close Hamas Offices in Amman

NC1503110096 Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic 11 Mar 96 p 17

[FBIS Translated Text] The Jordanian authorities have closed Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] offices in the Jordanian capital. Hamas sources expect that this measure will include the offices of some opposition Palestinian organizations in the next few days.

Informed sources have noted that a Jordanian-Israeli security liaison office has been set up to continue the measures to harass Hamas and its Jordanian Islamist supporters.

Jordan: Al-Kabariti Returns Home, Comments on Meetings in Egypt

JN1403181896 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, prime minister and foreign minister, returned to Amman this afternoon after participating in the Peacemakers Summit in Sharm al-Shaykh, Egypt, yesterday, and after attending the opening of the 105th ordinary Arab League Council foreign ministers' session today.

Al-Kabariti spoke to our correspondent Khalil al-Qaryuti about his meetings:

[Begin recording] My first meeting was with His Excellency Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid. We reviewed the efforts made at the Sharm al-Shaykh meetings, particularly since the Arab delegations held a coordination meeting during which they adopted a unified stand. We managed to include the Arab coordination committee resolutions in the joint statement—a statement that we believe is balanced and achieves the aspired goals of the conference.

I also met with Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, with whom I reviewed the results of the conference and the mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of the final statement issued at the Peacemakers Summit.

My meeting with the Kuwaiti foreign minister was friendly, and I think matters are headed in the right direction. I believe that the normalization of relations between our two states has taken its natural course. The situation is quite reassuring. I also had lengthy meetings with their excellencies the Syrian and Lebanese foreign ministers during which we discussed what happened at the Peacemakers Summit, its results, and the efforts that need to be made to resume the peace process. His excellency the Syrian foreign minister asserted Syria's determination to safeguard Syria's strategic option of peace.

For our part, we affirmed to his excellency the minister our support for Syrian rights and our readiness to support all efforts to resume the negotiations on all the tracks. [end recording]

Jordan: JORDAN TIMES Views Outcome of Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

JN1403141396 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 14 Mar 96 p 6

[Editorial: "Challenge After Summit"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The summit on peace-making, security-building and countering terrorism that was held in Sharm al-Shaykh yesterday ended on a positive note when it succeeded to contain the bickering over the language of the resolution that had to be adopted by the participants. A major point of contention was whether the assembled leaders should put the accent in their concluding remarks on consolidating what was achieved already on the peace front and pushing the remaining tracks forward or concentrating more on how to counter the kind of terrorism that was perpetrated against Israeli civilian targets over the past few weeks. What emerged at the end of the day and incorporated in the final communique of the meeting was a balance between the two perspectives in a bid to reconcile the two major schools of thoughts that were reflected in the deliberations, something which Jordan has tried hard to achieve right from the outset.

"Israel has the right to demand whatever it wants in the final draft because it needs to reassure the Israeli public and public opinion," commented Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti on the eve of the convening of the summit Wednesday. "At the same time," Mr. al-Kabariti went on to add, "Israel has to appreciate that there is also an Arab public opinion that also needs to be satisfied." Just as much as Israel urgently needs to send a clear message against terrorism to its people, the prime minister concluded, so does the Arab governments need to address their peoples' concerns.

In retrospect, the haggling about what comes first, the struggle against terrorism or the acceleration of the peace process should not have been necessary since the two goals are not mutually exclusive.

Pursuing the peace process in isolation of the fight against terrorism could put the cart before the horse. The only sensible thing left to do was to place equal and simultaneous importance on the two aims together. This "balance" ultimately proved the answer to the divergent views and this, as His Majesty the King pointed out upon returning to Amman yesterday, enabled the summit to be the international political gathering that it was in support of peace and security in this region.

But what is even more relevant than the political principles that were agreed upon and enunciated by the conference is the follow-up measures that have to be taken in order to achieve its goals and objectives. Israel cannot for ever continue to tighten the noose around the entire Palestinian territories every time a suicide bomber strikes within its borders. The collective punishment of innocent Palestinian people, including starving them and depriving them of basic medicines, cannot be the most effective prescription against terrorism. Israel should be the first to recognise that terrorism breeds on poverty and deprivation. Driving all the Palestinians to desperation would create the exact kind of environment that is most fertile for the scourge to grow in. The majority of Palestinians should not remain captive to the terrorism of a minority among them. On the other hand, and as the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch Organisation has called on the countries taking part in the meeting to keep in mind in their endeavours to defeat terrorism, basic human rights must be upheld at all times.

This means, inter alia, punishing only those guilty and not their relatives or loved ones, lawful police operations and not a free for all police actions, rejecting of torture as means to extricate information or evidence, ensuring fair trials, and avoiding hate propaganda. By the same token, fighting terrorism is a solemn obligation that all the Palestinian people must undertake in a bid to prevent its perpetrators from destroying what is otherwise a just and noble cause altogether.

Finally, the true success of the summit will depend on finding a workable mechanism for implementing its resolutions, in particular those which call for cooperation among countries fighting terrorism and supporting smaller nations that have to pay a heavy price for it. The next few weeks are going to be crucial in determining whether the effort is for real. This country, perhaps more than any other, will be able to tell if indeed the summiteers are serious about their own pledges to end, or at least reduce to a minimum, the threat of violence against civilian targets and innocent civilians, whatever the reason may be behind such actions.

Jordan: Press Views Results of Peacemakers Summit

JN1403125096

[FBIS Report] All 14 March issues of Jordanian Arabic-language newspapers comment on the results of the

Summit of Peacemakers held at the Red Sea Resort of Sharm al-Shaykh on 13 March.

AL-DUSTUR newspaper publishes on page one an approximately 400-word editorial headlined "A Strong Brick in the Edifice of Peace." The paper says: In the brief historic speech delivered at the international Summit of Peacemakers, His Majesty King Husayn said that the peace process, which began between the Arab states and Israel about 20 years ago and continued strongly over the past few years, constitutes practical and substantial evidence of the desire and genuine aspirations of the people of the region for a just, comprehensive, and permanent peace.

The paper goes on to say: "Therefore, the Summit of Peacemakers, which was held yesterday in the presence of leaders and representatives of some 30 states, is, according to the Jordanian viewpoint, a strong brick in the edifice of the aspired peace. It is even a practical and concrete response to the forces of extremism which are hostile to the peace process, especially since the peace makers have an interest, determination, and will to defend the peaceful steps that have been taken."

The paper notes: "The convening of the conference provided a good opportunity for delineating the clear and decisive difference between acts of terrorism and the tolerant Islamic Shari'ah, between jihad and terrorism, and between seeking martyrdom and suicide. Islam prohibits the killing of innocent people and intimidating civilians. This makes it necessary for Muslims, before anybody else, to combat and disavow terrorism."

In an approximately 550-word editorial on page 23, entitled "The Jordanian Presence at the Summit of Peacemakers," AL-RA'Y says: "This extensive international participation in the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the peace process in the entire region. This will be realized through boosting the firm international umbrella for the parties seeking peace and through beleaguering the opposite forces and counter elements, to cite His Majesty King Husayn's own words in his speech at the summit yesterday.

The paper adds: "The summit's statement stressed the need for cementing security and stability and foiling the enemies' schemes which desperately seek to bog down the peace process. This means, as His Majesty King Husayn said in all his remarks on this issue, that peace and security are two faces of the same coin. Peace and security are the only elements that should be allowed to exist on the map of partnership in peace as well as in development."

For its part, AL-ASWAQ, in a 400-word editorial on page 13, entitled "Combating Terrorism is Not Only About Security Measures," says: "The final statement of the Summit of Peacemakers was not expected to contain any further broadlines asserting the need to bolster the peace process, enhance security, and fight terrorism. These three elements were emphasized by all the heads of state and delegations who took the floor at the summit."

The paper maintains: "There was a consensus at the summit on diagnosing terrorism and on concluding that terrorism is not confined to a certain group, party, region, or religion. Therefore, giving a timely push to the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track and all other tracks to achieve a comprehensive peace is a top priority. This priority should be heeded through tightening the grip on extremists on both sides. Meeting peoples' aspirations for economic prosperity and the Palestinian people's hopes for overcoming the hard economic and living conditions is no less important than eradicating the environment that can be conducive to breeding and propagating extremism."

The paper argues: "We do not believe that the Summit of Peacemakers was held to discuss a security mission which could have been fulfilled by competent persons without having to hold such a gathering of leaders and officials. Consequently, it is expected that the summit drafted a plan and mechanisms for a serious endeavor to achieve comprehensive security of which regional security measures are a part."

The paper concludes: "If the aim of those who attended the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was to confront terrorism and establish real regional security, then the way to champion the peace camp is clear and requires drastic regional political and economic initiatives. Tangible world assistance should be extended so as to help the process of development and cooperation move forward under the canopy of peace."

In an approximately 350-word article on page 23 of AL-RA'Y, Dr. Fahd al-Fanik analyzes the results of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, saying: "The Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh succeeded in extending Arab and international support to the Israelis as well as to the Palestinians — in a manner that will prevent the collapse of the entire peace process. It will also give a push to the forces of peace and moderation on both sides, which narrowly escaped a fatal blow. The symbolic aspect is far more important than the measures to be taken, as the conferees cannot stop the suicide operations or guarantee that these operations will not reoccur."

Al-Fanik says: "The major upshot of the conference is the new lineup — there is no longer a confrontation between the Arabs and Israel along pan-Arab lines. Rather, there is an ideological confrontation between Arab and Israeli extremism on the one hand and Arab and Israeli moderation on the other. The point of contention is no longer liberating Palestine from the Jews or Judaizing the West Bank and Gaza Strip and emptying them of Arabs. Rather, it is whether the peace and settlement process will continue and achieve it objectives or be aborted soon and killed in its cradle."

Tariq Masarwah, also writing in AL-RA'Y, levels strong criticism at the summit's objectives. In an approximately 400-word commentary on page 22, he says: "It is unreasonable for the leaders of thirty states to convene in Sharm al-Shaykh to legitimize Israel's closure of the Palestinian cities and villages, demolition of houses, arrest of hundreds of citizens, going back on the peace agreements, and interpretation of these agreements in a way that will perpetuate occupation."

He adds: "It is equally unreasonable for the leaders of thirty nations to convene to issue a statement which is at the forefront of the Labor Party's electoral platform or to issue an indulgence [sak al-ghufran] for the U.S. President — an indulgence that will ensure his reelection or facilitate his mission in the Congress."

Masarwah concludes by saying: "No matter how hard the Israelis and their American allies try to convince people that raising one's voice against occupation and confiscation of the Palestinian will and life is terrorism, and occupation, siege, and closure is peace, they will not succeed. The people of this region are neither stupid nor ignorant."

Tahir al-'Adwan, a writer in AL-DUSTUR, also criticizes the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. In an approximately 450-word commentary on page 22, he says: "The Sharm al-Shaykh summit succeeded in ratifying the Israeli-American plans to combat terrorism. However, we doubt it succeeded in improving the atmosphere of peace or advancing the peace process."

He elaborates: "The summit will not help achieve a large stride toward peace either on the Palestinian track or on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Therefore, it is not expected that the war on terrorism will uproot terrorism, whose roots will be removed once the occupation is removed."

Concluding al-'Adwan says: Everybody denounced terrorism. Everybody, both Arabs and Palestinians, are looking forward to peace, prosperity, security, and stability. However, everybody realizes deep in his heart and mind that the current phrase of peace was emptied of its content. This is so because peace requires a drastic and daring change on the part of Israelis — a change commensurate with that on the Arab and Israeli side. Insistence on miring peace with security concerns, manifestations of occupation, water concerns, and raising the issue of Jerusalem's holy places and Arab quarters will itself provide an environment that will breed terrorism and keep it alive."

Lebanon: Hizballah Arrests Official Reportedly Recruited by CIA

NC1503114396 Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic 11 Mar 96 p 8

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah recently arrested A. N. after a one-year continuing manhunt in Beirut, the south, and other areas.

The detainee was a former important security official of Hizballah. In the past, specifically in 1985, he was in charge of security at the place where some foreign hostages were being held.

After the foreign hostages were released, Hizballah officials discovered that the CIA had infiltrated Hizballah by recruiting him. He carried out security operations hostile to Hizballah before he was uncovered when he tried to booby-trap a car used by a Hizballah security official over one year ago.

Hizballah is currently interrogating its former official to know if he has recruited others to work with him.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri—Confronting Occupation is 'Daily Practice'

NC1503085896 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri last night said that confronting the Israeli occupation is a daily practice. He said if 14 March 1978 marks the beginning of Israeli occupation of the Lebanese areas in the south and western al-Biqa', the Israeli attacks against Lebanon have been continuing since before that day for several years. He added: We do not exaggerate if we say that these attacks have been going on in various ways and forms since the establishment of the Israeli entity. Their aim is one, namely to strike Lebanon and all its institutions.

Al-Hariri said: Our devoted and brave people in the south, western al-Biqa', and in Beirut during the 1982 treacherous invasion, are stronger than the Israeli goals and designs. Our people have confronted these goals and designs with popular and official resistance. It is no coincidence that the Israeli demolition of houses is met by stubborn insistence by our people on continuing to build and reconstruct and to believe in a better future.

Prime Minister al-Hariri said 14 March is an occasion to declare a firm fact, namely that confronting the occupation is a daily practice and a continuing resistance. On this occasion, we reaffirm that we believe in a just, comprehensive, and honorable peace which will end the Israeli occupation of our land. We also believe in continuing the coordination with the brother Syrians to serve our common goals of liberation. The Golan, the south, and western al-Biqa' are dear to us. Peace cannot be achieved without the liberation of the occupied territories in Lebanon and Syria.

Lebanon: Hizballah Deputy Criticizes Sharm al-Shaykh Summit, Salutes Hamas

NC1403161996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1215 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committees held a joint meeting this morning to review Israeli actions against Lebanon, the consequences of the Israeli occupation, and the crimes and terrorism that Israel perpetrates against the Lebanese people. The ambassadors of several major powers attended the meeting, but some of them withdrew from the hall when Lebanese deputies criticized the positions of the countries supporting the Sharm al-Shaykh conference.

Several deputies addressed the chamber, exposing Israeli terrorism and urging the world to be on the side of right. The meeting adopted a six-point recommendation that backed the Lebanese Government's decision not to attend the Sharm al-Shaykh conference and declared support for the Lebanese resistance forces and the unity of the Lebanese and Syrian negotiating tracks. Our correspondent Sa'd Ilyas reports on the meeting.

[Begin Ilyas recording] The 14 March anniversary [Solidarity Day with the south] was very much in the air today when the Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committees held a joint session. The heads of Arab and foreign diplomatic missions attended the meeting. The meeting produced a six-point recommendation.

The Sharm al-Shaykh conference featured prominently in the deliberations of today's session and in the deputies' speeches, some of which were strongly worded, particularly that of Hizballah deputy 'Ali 'Ammar. He strongly criticized the United States and the other conferees in Sharm al-Shaykh. A large number of ambassadors and charges d'affaires withdrew from the meeting in protest. [passage omitted]

'Ammar addressed a greeting and expression of esteem to the mujahidin of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], the Lebanese resistance, and Islamic Jihad.

He said: Ever since the birth of Israel, our nation has been bleeding.

He pointed out that there is a tyrannical country in the world, representing the Satan of this age, as he put it. He said that this country is the United States, the enemy.

'Ammar remarked that Israel would not have been able to persist in its aggression without U.S. backing, as he put it.

Asking why the countries of the world came to Sharm al-Shaykh, 'Ammar provided this answer: They did not come for the sake of peace, but to rescue Peres from shame under the pretext of peacemaking.

'Ammar did not spare the Arab kings and presidents his criticisms and asked the ambassadors present at the meeting to convey the following message to their countries: If the whole world recognizes the Israeli entity, we will not recognize it as long as we live. We will continue to be resistance fighters and let the world call us by any name it wishes. If our resistance is terrorism as they claim, all of us are terrorists. We will not be intimidated by summit conferences like Sharm al-Shaykh.

At this point it was noticed that a large number of ambassadors and other diplomats withdrew from the meeting, notably the Saudi, Jordanian, Moroccan, French, and Kuwait ambassadors. U.S. Ambassador Richard Jones did not leave and remained in his place listening carefully to the criticism directed against his country. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Lebanon: Radio—Sharm al-Shaykh Cover-Up for Aid to Israel

NC1503083796 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] From the heart of Tel Aviv, U.S. President Bill Clinton announced a $100 million aid package to Israel. This aid proves that the Sharm al-Shaykh Summit was a cover-up to distribute U.S. and international aid to Israel on the pretext of fighting the so-called terrorism.

Meanwhile, Lebanon and Syria have intensified their efforts to coordinate for the post-Sharm al-Shaykh era. This was made apparent during the Arab League Council's meetings in Cairo yesterday. President Ilyas al-Hirawi also discussed this topic with Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who will leave for Cairo on an official visit.

President al-Hirawi also discussed the current developments with a number of deputies. Deputy Jean 'Ubayd quoted President al-Hirawi as saying that he understands the significance of the current phase and the need to promote national unity.

President Ilyas al-Hirawi told deputies who visited him that the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was an election rally. He said the current phase is delicate and crucial and requires solidarity among the Lebanese.

Syria: Press Defends Country's Nonparticipation in Summit

JN1503084296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0555 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline "Syria Takes No Wrong Positions," AL-BA'TH writes in its editorial: To those who believe that Syria made a mistake by not attending the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting or that its refusal to participate in this meeting was a wasted chance and a disappointing setback, we say that it is hard for Syria to take a wrong position or to make a wrong decision, especially if it is related to its national and pan-Arab issues. To not participate was a position that did not come from a vacuum and was not based on boycott for the sake of boycott. It was not meant to steal the limelight the meeting attracted for several hours. It was a position that was taken after careful consideration and came as a natural outcome of an explicit and declared policy that proceeds from principled stands under which no iota of rights shall be relinquished and no terms that would lead to incomplete peace shall be accepted.

AL-BA'TH indicates that when the world began to review the Sharm al-Shaykh final statement and began to analyze it through a flow of media comments from all capitals, facts began to resurface and everyone admitted that the meeting for show was held amid an instantaneous emotional atmosphere and circumstances that were in line with Israel's interests without taking into consideration the Arabs' collective or individual rights. This has been confirmed by the final statement, which came in the interest of the Israeli position.

AL-BA'TH then discusses the peace process and the ways leading it to its desired goal, especially in light of the U.S. President's statements, in which he reiterated his administration's commitment to achieve a just, comprehensive peace in the region. The paper refers to the U.S. President's assertion that no comprehensive peace is attainable without the Syrian track. This assertion is a clear acknowledgement of Syria's role and its importance for the region's stability and security. The paper says that by stressing its continued commitment to a just, comprehensive peace as a strategic option, Syria returns the peace process to its essence, avoiding any marginal issues which were meant basically to divert the peace process from its track.

AL-THAWRAH comments on the same subject. It writes: Not unexpectedly, Israel took advantage of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference to escalate its measures obstructing and opposing the bases of peace. No sooner had the conference been concluded than the Israeli Knesset, in a flagrant defiance of the international will and as an expression of gratitude for the conferees, endorsed a bill stressing the annexation of occupied Jerusalem and the Golan Heights by Israel.

AL-THAWRAH adds: The conference drifted behind Israel's fabrications, ignoring the objective facts about developments in the region. Thus, labeling any act against Israel as a terrorist act, the conference acquitted Israel of the charge which it has faced since its usurpation of Palestine. Israel has not given up such acts even during the four-hour conference, during which it continued its aggressive acts in southern Lebanon and in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The paper says: Had the conference been truly aiming for peace, it would have been prepared well and it would have been preceded by a preparatory conference. An agenda would have also been prepared so that all requirements of success would have been made available to address an issue of such great importance. It is the issue of peace in one of the most sensitive regions of the world. Israel has been placing obstacles in the path of peace for four and one-half years, in complete disregard for the principles of the peace process.

Concluding its comment, AL-THAWRAH stresses that proceeding from its eagerness for the establishment of a real peace, Syria called on the two cosponsors of the peace process to reconvene the Madrid conference. Syria stressed its commitment to the principles of this process and to achieving a just, comprehensive peace, because only such peace can provide security and stability for everyone in the region.

Syria: AL-THAWRAH 'Regrets' Arab Participation in Egypt Summit

JN1503112396 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0815 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Damascus, 15 Mar (SANA) — The newspaper AL-THAWRAH issued here today asserts that peace was the biggest absentee from the so-called Summit of Peacemakers. It notes that the conferees showed a flagrant bias in favor of a party who does not have a place for peace in its political literature — a party that practiced and is still practicing all forms of terrorism, aggression, blackmail, and occupation.

In its commentary, the paper says the Sharm al-Shaykh conference deliberately jumped to conclusions and overlooked the basics and the fundamental causes of the spate of violence and counter-violence in the region. It notes that the conference deliberately forgot the many Arab martyrs who fell in the past and those who are killed on a daily basis with Israeli bullets of betrayal, aggression, piracy, and brutal massacres.

The paper regrets Arab participation in the Sharm al-Shaykh conference — a participation that will be employed in consecrating the law of the jungle and liquidating the Arab causes.

It adds: Accordingly, the Syrian decision not to attend the conference was right as it stemmed from human, moral, and pan-Arab foundations that reject any mingling of terrorism, which is condemned, and legitimate national resistance against occupation, which has been exercised by all peoples on earth. The killer and criminal should not be put on an equal level with the victim.

Concluding its commentary, the paper asserts that the causes of tension are well known to all. It notes that utter failure will be the fate of any peace that does not observe the principles of justice, comprehensiveness, equitability, and equality and that does not stipulate Israel's withdrawal from all of the Golan and southern Lebanon and return to the 4 June lines. [passage omitted]

Syria: Paper Calls Peace Process 'Biggest Loser' at Summit

JN1403104096 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0550 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline "Israel Has Become More Intransigent After the Summit," the newspaper TISHRIN says: The Sharm al-Shaykh summit, with whose results Peres expressed full satisfaction, has encouraged Israel to be more intransigent.

The paper points to Peres' remarks that the closure of Palestinian territories will continue and will not be eased.

TISHRIN says: Observers of regional developments warned against this, especially since the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was convened hastily and without preparations and consultations, or even an agreement on the agenda. All this has reinforced the conviction that the objective of the summit was to support Israel, not to reactivate the peace process.

TISHRIN says: Israel is the side that has obstructed the achievement of tangible progress in the peace process.

The paper adds: While the summit was being held, the Israeli Knesset was meeting to make a decision on not returning the Golan to Syria even if Syria and Israel reach a peace agreement unless two thirds of its members approved this.

TISHRIN says: There had been attempts in the past to pass such a resolution by the Knesset, however, these attempts only succeeded after the convening of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. This is because the Israelis believe that the summit encourages them to continue their arrogance, intransigence, and rebellion against the resolutions of the international legitimacy, and the UN Charter and principles.

TISHRIN says: Thus, the Middle East peace process is the biggest loser at the summit, and the Arab causes have been harmed. The only winner, however, is the Zionist extremism which rejects peace and justice.

Concluding, the paper says: This necessitates a radical reconsideration of the peace process and its results. The peace process cosponsors should also call on the Madrid conference to reconvene to reiterate its bases and terms of reference before Israel finishes off the remaining hopes of achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Under the headline "Sharm al-Shaykh, the Objective and the Results," the newspaper AL-BA'TH says: The Sharm al-Shaykh summit was held very quickly in a way unprecedented in the history of international summits. It also ended with the same speed. So, it was more or less a political show that was imposed on some participants by some factors, on others by clear election considerations, and on some others by factors of appeasement for known reasons.

AL-BA'TH recalls the known terrorist acts that were masterminded by the Israeli rulers on land, at sea, and in the air in various parts of the world, which were carried out by regular forces and units.

The paper wonders: Why was this ardent zeal absent when the fascist rancor targeted the peaceful Arab worshipers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, when the Israeli forces destroyed houses, expelled Palestinians from their homeland, sent their aircraft to raid territories of other countries and to hijack civilian planes in the air, and when they resorted to assassinations in Norway, France, Britain, Lebanon, Tunisia, and others elsewhere?

AL-BA'TH also wonders: Why did the zeal of those who rushed to Sharm al-Shaykh not burst forth when Israel launched wars against the Arabs, occupied their territories, and rebelled against the international legitimacy? Why did they not rush forward during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and after each semidaily aggression against southern Lebanon?

AL-BA'TH says: What is even more serious is that they cannot see the Israeli rulers' repeated attempts to foil the peace process and strangle the historic opportunity to establish a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace?

AL-BA'TH stresses: The way to tackle the situation in the region with all its complications and difficulties is known and was agreed with the United States from the beginning; namely, to allow the peace process to achieve its set objective, a just and comprehensive peace. Syria has always called for following this path, and is now calling for it. It also urges all sides to follow this path. This is because the other paths will not achieve anything and will not defuse explosion and violence, especially since the aggressor is rewarded for his aggression, the usurper is rewarded for his usurpation, and the occupier is rewarded for his occupation; the real terrorists receive support; the criminal is acquitted of the victim's blood; and the antiterror slogan is used to achieve falsehood, as what happened at the Sharm al-Shaykh show summit.

In a commentary on the same subject, the newspaper AL-THAWRAH says: What is currently taking place once again proves that the partial and incomplete agreements which were signed at the expense of the Arabs' interests, rights, and territories, have not achieved peace or any form of security in the region. On the contrary, these agreements have further exacerbated the situation in the region, and caused more frustration and despair.

AL-THAWRAH adds: Consequently, this means that the problem will continue to exist as long as the just and comprehensive peace is absent. The cure for this is to return to the Madrid formula and terms of reference, and abide by the bases and principles enshrined in the UN resolutions, particularly returning all territories to their legitimate owners.

AL-THAWRAH says: Returning to the Madrid terms of reference will guarantee the pillars of an entrenched and lasting peace that will uproot the causes of tension and explosion, and allow all the region's peoples to live a peaceful and stable life. This return will also pave the way for a comprehensive assessment of what had happened in order to learn lessons and define the rules and frameworks that will correct the disorder which affected the peace process, save it from the current stalemate, and find the appropriate mechanism that will foil any attempt to obstruct it again.

Syria: World Urged To Confront Israeli 'Terrorism'

JN1403205596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1640 GMT 14 Mar 96

["Today's Talk" by Fayiz Qandil; from the "Palestine Broadcast" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] If there is anyone who truly wants to fight terrorism and who is truly looking for the real identity of terrorism and for clues to convict those who commit terrorism, then the Palestinian Arab people are willing to offer strong and conclusive evidence that terrorism in this part of the world — and in other remote parts, as well — is Israeli and Zionist terrorism committed by Zionist organizations before Israel was declared in mid-May 1948 and then committed by Israel itself. The 20th century has a wonderful record of the Palestinian people's resistance to Israeli terrorism.

Indeed, the Palestinian Arab people are willing to offer this evidence, although they are confident that any fair and impartial person who does not have illegal ambitions and narrow personal interests does not need this evidence. For example, does anyone need evidence that the butcher Baruch Goldstein, who committed the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre two years and three weeks ago, is an Israeli terrorist? In addition, no one needs evidence that Ari'el Sharon, former minister of the Israeli Army and butcher of Sabra and Shatila, is also an Israeli terrorist. Does anyone need proof of this, when the U.S. newspaper THE NEW YORK TIMES itself — which is famous for its unlimited bias toward Israel — said Sharon committed the massacres at Sabra and Shatila? This prompted Sharon to sue this major U.S. newspaper, seeking rehabilitation and financial compensation. Naturally, the terrorist Sharon did not win the case.

However, there may be a slight doubt that some people, especially those who live in countries where forests abound, such as Western countries, have not seen Israeli terrorism, since they have so many Israeli terrorists. This situation is similar to the popular saying that someone cannot see the forest for the trees. This, however, does not apply to Israeli terrorism, because the fact that there are too many Israeli terrorists will not conceal the forest of Israeli terrorism and because the forest of Israeli terrorism cannot hide behind the gathering of Israeli terrorists. Anyone who orders samples, or a large amount, of Israeli terrorism has only to order this from the Israeli Government or the Israeli colonialist Army or the Israeli espionage agencies. These agencies include the Mosad, Shin Bet, and the gangs of murderers and terrorist highwaymen known as settlement organizations, such as Shas, Kakh, and Gush Emunim, or from the rabbis, such as (Brokhman), (Stockman), (Bigman), Goldberg, Ginsburg, Rosenberg, or Rabbi (Naw) or Rabbi 'Ovadya Yosef.

But the question is: Why do those who claim that they are fighting terrorism neglect this cogent proof of Israeli terrorism? All of these people travel and pass through security at airports, seaports, and sea borders. Moreover, they know about security departments and realize that security men in all these areas wear identification cards with their photos, names, and titles on them so that everything is out in the open. They have heard from Israel itself what no other quarter in the world has dared to declare until now. Indeed, they have heard Israel express pride in and officially adopt a declaration on its special secret units.

We do not believe that anyone who follows the news in this world has not heard that the Israeli colonialist Army and the Israeli Government have formed a group of terrorist killers. Sometimes they call them special secret units, and other times they call them musta'ribin [those who pose as Arabs], because they have Arab features and speak Arabic so that the Israeli Government can send them — disguised in traditional Arab clothes — to mingle with Arab circles and, indeed, with the heroes of the intifidah in order to kill Palestinian youths, old people, women, and even children.

We hope, and we do not say we challenge, anyone who claims that he is fighting terrorism to say that he is not aware of this fact. We will send him a (guarantee) in the form of news agency cables that contain boasts by the Israeli colonialist Army and the Israeli Government about these terrorists called special secret units, or musta'ribin units. Anyway, these units are disciplined, deterred, and strongly restrained by Palestinian strugglers, because, after the violations and intimidation perpetrated by Israeli terrorists, Palestinian strugglers are becoming more convinced each day that a just peace is not something that should be begged from Israel. It should be imposed on Israeli colonization and terrorism, given that the Israeli occupation, colonization, settlement, and terrorism are faces of the same crime and are forbidden, declared illegal, and specified in the agreements signed in The Hague and in Geneva. Perpetrators of such crimes stood trial at Nuremberg's court 51 years ago after the end of World War II.

Syria: Radio Reiterates Call For Resumption of Madrid Conference

JN1403160596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1240 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] If there were any peacemakers or supporters of peacemaking in this part of the world, then Syria would be in the lead of the real peacemakers and those who support peacemaking for an obvious reason: it has adopted peace as a strategic option and has offered everything necessary for the success of the peace process.

However, the real support for peacemaking begins with naming the party that is responsible for failing to realize peace, or at least for failing to achieve the progress that is supposed to match the arduous efforts and the numerous rounds held over approximately four and a half years.

Those who have been following the peace process throughout this period remember how Israel has drowned this process since the beginning — first in procedural matters, and then in maneuvers over the place of the negotiations. Later, it went too far and drowned the peace process in worthless discourse on the nature of peace, the level of the negotiations, and other issues that were supposed to be discussed once peace was achieved. The expression most commonly used by observers and news agencies to describe this situation is: putting the cart before the horse.

Even after the peace process was reactivated through U.S. efforts late last year, Israel returned to dictating impossible terms that threatened to take the peace process back to square one, a point from which it had not advanced much. This has been Israel's behavior, and the whole world is aware of it. It always tries to avoid commitment to the international resolutions that stipulate withdrawal from the occupied lands. In any case, peace could have been achieved within the past four years if Israel had announced its readiness to implement the international resolutions, without which no comprehensive and strong peace can prevail. However, Israel has preferred partial solutions, which has exacerbated the tense and volatile situation.

The party that caused the obstruction of the peace process is the same party responsible for the state of tension, violence, and counterviolence. There is no need for details to clarify this violence, with which the history of Israeli occupation is replete, in order to condemn this policy, which neither serves peace nor corresponds with the loud voices raised by the Israeli politicians on combating terrorism.

In all cases, clamorous propaganda cannot deny a right or prove a falsehood to be true. Similarly, any sincere effort to deal with reciprocal violence in the region must begin by tackling the real reasons behind the violence and not by viewing isolated incidents from only one angle. The reason for tension and violence in the region is the absence of peace as a result of the Israeli occupation. This occupation, like any other occupation, is enough to incite the owners of occupied lands, whose rights to resist have been usurped.

Since violence is the result of occupation and absence of peace, not the cause, the practical way to bolster the peace process is to accept the Syrian Arab Republic's invitation to the two sponsors of the peace process to resume the Madrid conference. This is the proper framework to deal with the deep crisis facing the peace process.

It is useless to overlook facts. Security can be realized by means of a just peace and by guaranteeing the rights and dignity of all people, not by intensifying closure and shelling and clinging to occupation. Legitimacy and international consensus resolutions are the only guarantee for security and stability, which is what Syria has always called for and advocated.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Iranian Delegation in Mazar-e Sharif for Mazari Anniversary

LD1403201096 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Javad Mansuri, adviser to the foreign minister of Iran, arrived on Monday [11 March] in Mazar-e Sharif, capital of Balkh Province. His political delegation is taking part in the martyrdom anniversary of Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Abdol 'Ali Mazari, leader of the Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity Party] of Afghanistan.

According to a Tehran radio report, yesterday Mansuri addressed a ceremony held in Mazar-e Sharif for this occasion. The source added that Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Abdol 'Ali Mazari was martyred on 22 Hut [13 March] last year, along with eight of his colleagues after being tortured.

Afghanistan: 2 Pakistanis Among 15 Taleban 'Mercenaries' Killed

LD1403174396 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1430 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As a result of heavy weapons fire and air raids carried out yesterday by the Islamic army, two Pakistani men operating in the ranks of the Taleban group were killed.

According to reports, as a result of government forces' attacks, the Taleban group sustained heavy loss of life during the past two days and 15 so-called Taleban mercenaries were killed. Two commanders of the Taleban group were among those killed. The report adds that as a result of the air raids, one enemy [word indistinct] set and a Datsun motor vehicle were destroyed.

As a result of the heavy weapons fire carried out yesterday, eight men of the Taleban group were killed and 11 others were wounded. 'Abdol Satar and Mohammad Ehsani, two Pakistani mercenaries, were among those killed.

According to another report, exchanges of fire are continuing south of Kabul. A responsible source said the artillery gunners have responded to the firing of heavy weapons by the Taleban group.

Afghanistan: Dostam Forces Disarm Hezb-e Eslami Members in Mazar-e Sharif

LD1403180896 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1430 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A number of Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] members were recently disarmed in Mazar-e Sharif by the Dostam forces.

According to reports received by BAKHTAR, a number of ringleaders of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami, together with their men, were disarmed recently and several of their motor vehicles were seized in Mazar-e Sharif by Dostam's forces. The main reason for this action was the assassination of two Hezb-e Eslami commanders, and clashes in Baghlan Province between the forces of General Dostam and the Hezb-e Eslami.

Afghanistan: 6 Kabul Residents Wounded in Taleban Rocket Attack

LD1403174796 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Last night the Taleban group fired rockets on Kabul, wounding six. BAKHTAR reports that the wounded, who were inhabitants of the Darolaman and Chehelsotun areas, have been transferred to hospitals. Three of them were released after receiving medical attention.

India

India: Commentary—PRC's Expansionist Designs in Taiwan Straits Viewed

BK1403131796 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Commentary by Anil Kalga of the PRESS TRUST OF INDIA]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Straits, where the mighty China is trying to roughshod [as heard] tiny Taiwan, formally known as Formosa, gives a clue to at least two vital perspectives. One, it seems to be a precursor of Beijing's probable plan of action in the future to recover the territory which it lost in 1949 and which goes far beyond the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macao in 1999. Two, it indicates a shift in China's policy focus on Taiwan from peaceful reunification to more emphasis on force. It is also to forestall the ambitions of the rebel island which is campaigning for international diplomatic recognition.

Ironically, China is conducting the military exercises and firing missiles in the general direction of Taiwan, which has invested billions of dollars in the country. It is a clear message that the Communist regime will not be a quiet spectator anymore in the Taiwanese efforts to make independence an important issue in next week's presidential elections. China has consistently practiced a policy of coercion against Taiwan which, it maintains, is its inalienable part.

The visit of Taiwanese president, Mr. Li Teng-hui, to the U.S. last June triggered a fresh diplomatic row. In protest against allowing the leader of the renegade province, China called back its envoy in Washington. The Americans, who supported the free market economy of Taiwan, feel it as a duty to protect the cash-surplus island which has over $90 billion in its reserves. The mounting strains became more evident with the United States ringing alarm bells and underlining its concern by assembling one of the largest American armadas in the region since the Vietnam war. The U.S. has dispatched its Japan-based aircraft carrier, Independence, with its escorts to the region in a show of its disquiet at China's moves. Another nuclear power carrier, Nimitz, and its battle group is said to be on its way from the Gulf.

The war games are also intended to scare off Taiwanese and reduce the majority that President Li Teng-hui is expected to win. Li has never publicly said that he favors independence but has linked himself to Moses, the prophet who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt in 13th century BC. The Chinese premier, Li Peng, said late last week that resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macao as well as moves to achieve earlier reunification with Taiwan were major steps in the country's efforts to reestablish its territorial integrity.

The Chinese moves carry disturbing messages of long-term expansionism and especially the resource-rich ocean sector bordering China. While its neighbors remain committed to engaging China in as many economic, political, and security exchanges as possible in the hope that prosperity will curb any irredentist agenda, Beijing's evident readiness to use force or the threat of force is a source of alarm in the region.

The whole issue has put the Americans in a dilemma over China. Not merely in the context of the sale of ring magnets for enriching uranium to Pakistan and sale of missiles to Pakistan and Iran, but in an all-encompassing manner. Military conflict between China and the U.S. over Taiwan is unlikely. As the State Department claims the U.S. flotilla is only intended to convey concern over China's, so to say, reckless exercises and calm the situation. But, even if Sino-U.S. conflict in the seas around Taiwan is unlikely, the exercises have poisoned the atmosphere with Washington before a series of potential showdowns over human rights and trade.

In the months between Taiwan's presidential polls and the U.S. presidential election in November, Beijing and Washington are set to trade blows later this month over a U.S.-sponsored UN resolution condemning Chinese human rights violations. In June, the battle ground will shift to this year's renewal of China's most favored nation, MFN, trade status. President Bill Clinton is expected to extend the MFN status but Congressional leaders expect a lot tougher sail because of China's harassment of Taiwan, a hot issue in a Republican-controlled Congress. The (?fore state) of Congressional sentiment is already evident in the draft resolutions of the Senate and the House of Representatives, which criticize China's missile tests and calls on the United States to be ready to provide defensive weapons to Taipei. But, Taiwan should not expect much help from the U.S., because for Americans, economics will definitely take precedence over safeguarding democracy; and ultimately the U.S. business community, which has invested billions of dollars in China, may have the final say. China is also well aware of this reality.

India: Chavan Says Government Ready for Talks

BK1503005796 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In a major bid to end the strife in Jammu and Kashmir, the government will tomorrow hold talks with leaders of some prominent Kashmiri militant groups. Talking to newsmen after the defense investiture ceremony in the capital, the home minister said that the government is ready for unconditional talks even with pro-Pakistan militants. The groups whose leaders are to attend tomorrow's meeting are the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Muslim Janbaz Force, the Al-Burq group, and the Muslim Mujahideen. The leaders of these groups had last week announced in Srinagar that they accepted the government's offer of unconditional talks and said they wanted to end the bloodshed in the state.

Reports say that though the Hurriyat [All Parties Hurriyat Conference] has some reservations about the talks, one of its leaders is likely to attend the meeting. Mr. Chavan will be assisted by senior officials of the Home Ministry during the talks. Meanwhile, Azam Inqilabi, leader of another militant group, has welcomed the talks saying it is a good beginning. Speaking at a press conference in New Delhi, Mr. Inqilabi said that a dialogue is a step in the right direction in resolving the long-pending Kashmir issue.

Reports just in say that four militant leaders have arrived in the capital for tomorrow's talks. They are Imran Rahi and Ghulam Muhiuddin Lone of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Babar Badr of the Muslim Janbaz Force, and Bilal Lodhi of the Al-Burq. The reports say some more militant leaders are likely to join the talks.

India: Minister Discusses Kashmir Solution With 'Militant Leaders'

BK1503090196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Center has constituted a three-member high-level committee to work out modalities for discussions with the Kashmiri militant leaders. This was announced by the home minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, after his discussions with a group of militant leaders in New Delhi today.

Briefing newspersons on his interaction, Mr. Chavan said the militants now appear to be convinced that gun culture will not help them and the people of Kashmir. He said the committee headed by the special secretary in the Home Ministry, Mr. V.K. Jain, will carry out further talks with these leaders to find an amicable solution to the vexed issue. Mr. Chavan said he will visit Kashmir to continue the talks, but the details are being finalized. The home minister said there are forces which are not friendly with the idea to have dialogue with the militants. Therefore, some way to confidence building has to be found.

Replying to questions, Mr. Chavan said the offer of unconditional dialogue is open to all, including the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

Referring to holding of elections in the state, the minister said government is serious about holding parliamentary elections in Jammu and Kashmir also.

Asked about the involvement of any third party, including Pakistan, in these discussions, Mr. Chavan firmly ruled out such a possibility.

Today's talks assume significance since it is for the first time that a section of militant groups had a face-to-face exchange of views with the Center. They have formed a forum for permanent resolution of Jammu and Kashmir with Firdaus Baba, the former chief of Muslim Janbaaz Force, its chairman. The other members of the forum include the former chief of the Al Barq, Bilal Lodi; founder chiefs of Hizbul Mujahideen Ghulam Rasool Shah and Ghulam Mohiuddin Lone. Other militant leaders who participated in today's interaction included Shabbir Ahmad Wani, Parvez Haider, Abu Habib, Mohammad Yusuf Khan, and Ghulam Mohammad Chaman.

India: Commentary Hails Kashmiri Leaders' Talks With Government

BK1503123096 Delhi All India Radio General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 15 Mar 96

[Commentary by M.K. Tikku]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The talks between leaders of the four Kashmiri militant groups and the union home minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, which began on Friday mark a qualitative change in the situation in Kashmir. It is for the first time in seven years since the beginning of militancy in the Kashmir valley in 1989 that a group of militant leaders have made bold [as heard] to come forward to hold talks with the central leaders. It does not matter whether these four leaders and the groups they represent constitute a majority opinion at this moment among the militant groups in the valley. What matters is that these four have set off a trend, which, given the ground situation in the valley, is bound to gather momentum as the talks move further apace. For, it must be appreciated that the initiative taken by the four leaders is itself related to certain changes in the public mood back in Kashmir.

As a number of reports from the valley over the past few months have indicated, the common people have been feeling utterly bored with the militancy situation. Some of them who had supported the militancy earlier were feeling frustrated since the militant groups had failed to deliver what they had promised. And the militants themselves despite the help in terms of sophisticated weapons and training facilities that they had been receiving from across the border were not able to drastically change the situation on their own strength. If they had been promised any back-up support from across the border, that did not appear to be materializing. On top of that, there had been a proliferation of militant groups of all sizes and descriptions. The militancy movement having started with a single group followed by a schism resulting in two groups now comprises of 40 to 50 identifiable outfits. And though the Hurriyat Conference had been created as an umbrella organization to contain these separate groups, that did not really end the occasional bouts of internecine fighting between them.

Seen in the context of these developments, it becomes easier to appreciate that the four leaders could stand up in the face of the Hurriyat leaders' known position and declare their readiness to talk with the leaders in New Delhi without any preconditions. The fact that the national elections were due soon too must have added an element of urgency to the emerging situation. The fact that Muslim Mojahideen leader Ghulam Nazi Azad declared in Srinagar earlier in the week that his group would be willing to contest the forthcoming elections in the state was one more indication that these developments in Kashmir were moving out of a stalemate and showing new dynamism with a lot of options and possibilities to explore.

Here, one must be warned that it would not be right to expect immediate or dramatic results from the talks that have just commenced between Mr. Chavan and the militant leaders. This should be seen as the beginning of the process that should come to fruition after taking into account all shape of opinion in the three regions comprising the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Mr. Chavan has done well in declaring that New Delhi would be willing to hold unconditional talks even with the pro-Pakistan militant groups. This should make it possible even for the Hurriyat leaders to get rid of their past inhibitions and join the process that has just started. But as the talks progress, the central government must make it clear to the participating groups that no single group or party could claim a dominant position in this exercise. Secondly, as the talks progress the hold of the gun must be gradually made irrelevant to the process of the dialogue paving the way for its elimination from the public scene in due course. One thing more for arriving at a durable solution to the Kashmir situation: it is vital that such a solution should be based on the widest possible consensus evolved across the three regions of the state keeping in the best traditions of Kashmiriath [people of Kashmir].

India: Rao Views Election Candidates

BK1403062396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Congress-I president, Mr. Narasimha Rao, has said that the selection of party candidates for the Lok Sabha elections will begin today. Preference will be given to younger people. Mr. Rao was addressing the meeting of the general body of the Congress party in parliament in New Delhi yesterday. He stressed the need for educating people on the programs launched by the Congress-I government at the center. He said the devotion and discipline of the members made it possible for democracy to run for five years uninterruptedly. Mr. Narasimha Rao said the party has to attend to many difficult political questions in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. He said he is in touch with the members and partymen of these states and the right decision will be taken on time. Mr. Narasimha Rao later addressed the executives of the Congress-I parliamentary party.

India: Finance Minister Interviewed

BK1303082096 Delhi BUSINESS STANDARD in English 4 Mar 96 p 6

["Excerpts" of an interview with Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh by an unidentified correspondent on 2 March; place not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Question: Now that you have been finance minister for five years, what do you see as the quality of our political process when it comes to key economic decisions?

Answer: Well obviously it requires a great deal of change, particularly in relation to the management of the fiscal system. Our political processes do not give adequate recognition to the fact that this country cannot become rich simply by more spending. There is an obsession with nominal plan expenditure, even when we know that the way in which these expenditures are financed will sooner or later lead to accelerated inflation. We do not promote the cause of growth if we cannot finance expenditure through a non-inflationary mechanism. That really is the great weakness of our political process.

Q: What about deregulation and liberalisation?

A: I think deregulation hurts entrenched interests among both politicians and bureaucrats. And, there has been substantial resistance. But public opinion and what is happening in the rest of the world have influenced public perceptions. In this area the Indian press has performed a superb role in educating public opinion. It has influenced the mindsets of even those politicians who would like to persist with the old licensing type of system which gave them tremendous discretionary powers.

Even when we have said that the private sector should come in, there has been slow recognition that private sector entry cannot be in what can best be described as situations of imperfect competition. In public utilities, you can have only a limited number of entries. There has been slow recognition that these processes should be transparent, and objective, that these transactions are arm's-length transactions. There has also not been strong awareness that, if you want the private sector to come into areas which have hitherto remained government monopolies, and there is strong government regulation, then you will not get the adequate response from the private sector unless you have tariff and other related policies which provide a credible assurance of a decent rate of return.

Q: You are credited with having changed the country's mindset. But your comments don't seem to suggest that this seems to have taken place with the political class.

A: Well I think it has happened. It may not have happened at the space that we would have wanted. But I think the Prime Minister must be given credit for this, that he has indeed succeeded in changing the mindset. Look at what Mr Deve Gowda is doing and saying in Karnataka, look at what Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Somnath Chatterjee are saying and doing in West Bengal, or even for that matter even the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government in Gujarat and (with the minor aberration over Enron) even in Maharashtra. So, in that sense there has been a radical change in the way in which the Indian people, and even the Indian politicians, think about economic problems. The pace may not have been as fast as I would have liked. If there had been greater cohesiveness in thinking in 1991, we would have moved at a faster pace. But we had to convince our own party we had to convince the opposition....

Q: Would some of the key decisions that were difficult in 1991, and which were not taken up at that time be possible after the elections?

A: I think fiscal correction is the most difficult part. In any democratic polity, it is only the finance minister who has to worry about raising resources, the rest of the government machinery and ministers derive their patronage from spending.

Q: What about other issues like privatisation of the public sector, land policy in the cities, labour legislation...?

A: I think those things will come. I don't think any of those issues can be blocked. In our government, for example, there has been broad agreement that the urban land ceiling law needs a radical re-look. But when we were making changes, there were elections in Delhi.... In Karnataka they have had the courage to say that even the land reform legislation needs to be given a fresh look. Even about industrial relations some workers' representatives have argued...I am pretty confident that these can be pushed if the Indian economy is so managed that we do not land in some serious balance of payments crisis, or we do not create a situation where there is accelerated inflation. Personally I believe that the country is ready to accept the rest of the reforms.

Q: What is the extent of danger on these two fronts? A fresh balance of payments problem, and renewed inflation.

A: That will depend very much on whether fiscal correction continues. I would be the first person to admit that the fiscal correction is not as strong as it should have been. We have to reduce the fiscal deficit to about 3 per cent of GDP in the next three to four years. Whether you like it or not, the world is mesmerised by what happens to the fiscal deficit. The confidence in the economy is greatly strengthened by good fiscal management. That I think should be the key priority of any government which takes the task of development seriously.

Q: There is speculation that there might be a coalition government after the elections. In your assessment does that make economic reforms more difficult, or it does not matter?

A: As I said, economic policy making has been very de-politicised. And history will give due credit to Narasimha Rao for having brought this about. As far as coalitions are concerned, I don't believe there is going to be a coalition. The Congress party is all set to confound the sceptics. As far as economic policies are concerned there is a broad convergence. But even then we have never functioned in a coalition. I think Indian politicians haven't yet mastered the art of working together cohesively in a coalition. I think it would be much too unsafe for the country not to vote for a party which has such a strong commitment to the reform process as the Congress party.

Q: What about the link between public corruption and economic reforms? You know what is going on here just now, and similar things have been happening in Japan, Korea, Italy and elsewhere.

A: Where governments have tremendous discretionary powers there is always scope for misuse of power. And when I talk about liberalisation, I have said that it must not degenerate into crony capitalism. That we open up a field and then I choose the person whose face I like. There must be transparent and objective rules of the game. That will also reduce the uncertainty that prevails in the country when it comes to economic decision-making, and it will greatly reduce the scope for delays.

Q: You mentioned the nominal increase in plan outlay as a problem area. But the focus of expenditure control has been on investment, and the result is the infrastructure problem.

A: We must look at the totality of investment. We have been bringing government out of industry, so....

Q: But even before private investment has come in....

A: In real terms gross fixed capital formation in 1994-95 was an all time record. But the problem of leads and lags is an economic phenomenon. I think it is going to happen because, after all, Rs [rupees] 27,500 crore have been mobilised in the Indian capital market, whereas before 1991-92 not more than Rs 3000-4000 crore were raised. Sooner or later all this is going to lead to increased production. If you look at the production of capital goods....

Q: Don't you see an infrastructure problem building up?

A: Of course, there are infrastructure problems. But these are not necessarily solved by investments. Look at the problems of the power sector, and the reluctance of the political system to recognise that you cannot have power if you do not have tariffs that are cost-based. The state governments are bankrupt, they are giving maximum subsidies for rural power supply and therefore their budgets are in difficulty, and even subsidies don't come to the state electricity boards on time. So private generators are reluctant to supply power to the boards. They don't know whether the boards will be able to pay them, or pay them in time. By the state or central government spending extra money on power without reforming the power system, it can only lead to large-scale deficit financing.

Q: The other problem in the budget is excise collection. Industry is buoyant but excise collection is not. How much is this linked to misuse of modvat [modified value-added tax]?

A: There is some misuse of modvat but we took a very bold decision with regard to its extension to capital goods. If I had spread the modvat credit on capital goods over five years, as was the advice given to me, most of the problems on the excise front would not have arisen. But I thought that would be administratively cumbersome and also create scope for arbitrariness. In another two years we should see improved performance in excise. Partly, the problem is also this countervailing duty that we imposed, so the revenue from customs looks higher than it otherwise would be.

Q: But what is the extent of modvat misuse?

A: Well I think there is some misuse, but these are things which happen when we make basic structural changes. I am not able to quantify the extent of abuse.

Q: The latest trade data indicates a big spurt in imports in January. What does this hold for the exchange rate?

A: We should not look too much into weekly, monthly statistics. The trade data does not necessarily reflect what happens on the payments side. I don't think there is any danger of our current accounts deficit going beyond 1.5 percent of GDP.

Q: Don't you see a basic weakness in the rupee today?

A: The current account gap is 1.5 per cent and will be fully backed by long-term capital inflow, so why should that be a weakness? India is a net importer of capital and will remain a net importer of capital. So long as we are able to achieve sufficient capital inflows to finance the current account deficit, there won't be any untoward pressure on the exchange rate.

Q: You were quoted as having said that we could look forward to $10 billion per year as foreign investment.

A: I said that in the next two/three years one should work towards a system where you have an annual inflow of private investment which rises from 4 or 5 billion dollars now to about 10 billion dollars.

Q: This assumes that we can absorb this kind of investment. The last time this happened, in 1993-94, it created upward pressure on the rupee.

A: Most of our corporate entities were not prepared for it at that time. But now all the business enterprises are convinced that liberalisation has come to stay, that the import policy will remain liberal, that import duties will be reduced, that they will survive only through restructuring. The upsurge in capital goods production and capital goods imports is a reflection of that. In this sort of environment, we will have to make private investments in the power sector and today there is preparedness in the country to invest in the power system. Similarly, you see a lot more private investment in the telecom sector. The government's decision to increasingly privatise, for example, the port system. The railways have come up with this new idea that they will mobilise about Rs 600 crore through this route. If you have larger inflows, there will be less problem of absorption.

Q: If you look at the concessional flows that are coming in, the figures now show a net outflow, for the first time.

A: Frankly speaking, the era of concessional flows is coming to an end. The 11th replenishment of IDA [International Development Association] has run into difficulties. India has to learn to survive and flourish in a world without these artificial props, which have been very valuable props; we have been able to get billions of dollars at low rates of interest for a period of 40-50 years. But that has also hidden the underlying low productivity of resource use. World Bank money is not soft loan money. And we don't have a very large positive transfer of resources from any bilateral donor excepting Japan.

Q: Would you then see the net outflow continuing in the future?

A: It does not have to be a net outflow. In some years some states are slack in implementing projects. There is delay in spending money, so we cannot collect money from the donors and the World Bank, but these flows will not in net terms be a positive factor in helping our balance of payments. We have to look to the private sector increasingly to meet the gap in the balance of payments. This is inevitable.

Q: Do you think there has been a fiscal squeeze on the states in the last few years? If you take a look at the latest year, the buoyancy in tax revenue has not been shared with the states. The tenth finance commission had recommended a pooling of all tax revenues so that buoyancy is equally shared.

A: That requires consultation. I would be happy to opt for the finance commission's solution. But I talked to several chief ministers, and for them the commission's suggestion (of how much the states should get) is just the starting point (of negotiation). If they want to go from 29 per cent pooling to 40 per cent, then the central government cannot simply absorb that. The real problem is that the central government has taken on many functions of the state governments and this must be taken into account when people say the states have been squeezed.

Q: What are these functions?

A: Well, look at elementary education, and water supply. This year we had to undertake provision of water supply for 87,000 villages. These are not the functions of the central government.

Q: Why is the government taking this responsibility?

A: Because the state governments do not pay adequate attention to these things. There may be valid reasons, but many states are diverting resources.

Q: Is it true that Andhra Pradesh is asking you for money to pay salaries?

A: I would not like to comment on any one state's finances. But several states are in difficulties. There are various electoral compulsions, and they end up undertaking programmes which strain the fiscal system. Yesterday (Friday) the Prime Minister mentioned in Parliament that in various states we have sent money for drought relief and that money was diverted for payment of salaries.

Q: Are you saying that you would have no problem with pooling all tax resources, after a consultation process?

A: That was also the intention of the Finance Commission. I think it will be much better if the consultation process takes place after the election. You have then a central government which has a mandate for five years.

Q: Do you feel that your budgetary numbers for next year are conservative, on revenue projections, on the fiscal deficit?

A: My feeling is that even for the current year, we will do better than I have projected in the revised estimates. I have the hunch that our revenue projections for next year also are conservative. And I have built in sufficient cushion for the finance minister whosoever he will be. I have provided Rs 5,000 crore of contingent expenditure. I have not taken credit for any basic telecom license fees even in this year, so they will spill over to next year. So there is a cushion, and I have every reason to believe that the fiscal system will not throw up as formidable problems as I faced when I became finance minister.

Q: What about the domestic debt problem and the interest burden?

A. It is a serious problem. I think our interest burden will go up next year by Rs 8,000 crore. That will be 47 per cent of our revenue receipts.

Q: It has in fact come down for the first time, from 51 percent.

A. Yes, it has come down. It has to be a multi-pronged strategy. We must reduce the fiscal deficit at a faster pace. That of course leads me to the expenditure policy, tax policy. We have to increase the share of taxes, particularly direct taxes, in GDP, by at least 1.5 per cent of GDP in the next two three years. We should reduce taxes, ensure wider coverage. I should compliment Mr (MR) Sivaraman for the excellent work that he has done as revenue secretary. There are very few revenue secretaries who have put their heart and mind into the problems and tackled them as he has done.

Q: As secretary he is very efficient but the system has not been reformed, it is as corrupt as ever.

A: I am not saying that one swallow makes a summer. It will take systematic effort. There is a vast element of discretion built into our tax system. We will need to alert public opinion, plus put pressure from within the system to see that this discretion is exercised within the four corners of the law. The process has begun and I can say that in 2-3 years...

Q: If you go to the inspector level...

A: I admit that it is a problem. I agree that it is a problem.

Q: Why didn't you stand by the customs officer Sakuntala?

A: Well, there was no question for me to stand by Sakuntala. I had delegated these powers to the board and the board in their wisdom took that decision and it was a collective decision of the board and therefore...

Q: Don't you think that something wrong was done in this case?

A: Well, the case is in the court and it is not proper for me to comment, it is sub judice. Having delegated all these powers to the board, and these are all secretary-level administrators, additional secretary level; it was the collective decision of the board. I as the finance minister felt it was not correct on my part to interfere in the matter.

Q: Even when the chairman wrote to you, you said I am not going to....

A: No, they sent me a note for information and....

Q: You mean no decision was sought from you....

A: No decision. Because I had delegated these powers as finance minister to the board.

Q: But shouldn't you intervene when you see something you may feel is not correct....

A: I can express a point of view on the merits of the case. But it would not be proper when the case is before the court.

Q: Going back to the 5-year perspective, total tax revenue as a percentage of GDP has fallen. Do you think tax policy reform could have been done in a different way to protect tax revenue?

A: No. If you are going to reduce customs duties from 300 per cent to a maximum of 50 per cent, raw materials duties are zero, capital goods 25 per cent, then it was an inevitable phase. Of course if the economy was not in a crisis, I could have jacked up excise duties. But that would have been counter-productive. It would have depressed the animal spirits of our businessmen unduly. They were worried about the effects of the economic crisis, they were worried about the initial effects of import liberalization. If I had jacked up the excise duty, it would have perpetuated stagflation. Now confidence has been built up. The fear that liberalisation will hurt them is a thing of the past. In the years to come I think we will have greater manoeuvrability.

Q: How do you reset to the fact that real interest rates are at a record high today?

A: Interest rates must come down if we are successful in keeping inflation at the levels which are now prevailing. I have said often that if inflation expectations can be brought down, that India is no longer going to live with the 8 per cent annual inflation rate which has been built into Indian thinking for the last 40 years, then interest rates should come down.

Q: But what about the macroeconomic problems that are there today?

A: I agree that the rates of interest are high. But having said that, one should not overestimate the problem, because interest is a tax-deductible cost. With the corporate tax rate of 40 per cent plus surcharge that we have, the incidence of interest cost on the total cost of production can be exaggerated. Particularly in enterprises where the product cycle is of a fairly short duration. It is a problem for long gestation projects, but I think where technological change is taking place and obsolescence is a problem that industry has to face, interest cost is not a material influence on investment decisions.

Q: What should be the ideal level of real interest rates?

A: I think the real interest rate should not be more than 2 to 3 per cent.

Q: That means a significant correction in the banking system...

A: I am not saying all this can happen. Because you have the problems of non-performing assets in the banking system. We are bringing them down and have brought them down. There are some cross subsidies built into the bank lending rates, we have to live with that. You cannot overnight say that we will not give credit to agriculture, small industries and other priority sectors at reasonable rates of interest. Therefore, we have to live with some of these distortions, but that must be the objective we have to work towards.

Q: The Economic Survey dealt with long-term financing of projects vis-a-vis institutional savings. What exactly did you have in mind?

A: At present you have all these restrictions regarding investments of funds of provident funds. We have to create new products, or, for example, private pension funds. But merely diverting the savings that now flow into the government sector is not the solution to the problem. Ideally, government over a period of time should also have less element of consumption, and invest the savings mobilized. The Life Insurance Corporation, for example, is not able to pay remunerative terms to its policy-holders because of the compulsions under which it operates.

Q: What about the overall Issue of developing the debt market?

A: We have to create a sufficiently vibrant debt market us government security. Reserve Bank has taken some steps, setting up dealers....

Q: That hasn't really worked.

A: I am not familiar with all the details. But that is the way. If it does not work, then we must think of other measures. We need a strong, vibrant debt market. The problem in the past was that banks never thought in terms of trade. They bought government securities, put them in their lockers and never thought in terms of trading in those securities. But now the government is heading towards market-related rates of interest and they are saying that the interest will change and there are opportunities where people who anticipate what is going to happen to the market can make money.

Q: Do you feel, given the lack of demand for government paper, that the way you finance the government's deficit should change. Some people argue that you should be printing more currency notes.

A: There is a school of thought, I think Professor Sargent has written that if you cannot control government expenditure; then it is probably better to go that route. But the conventional wisdom today is that that will be a disastrous course. In the open economy that you operate in, if you want to mobilise large amounts of international capital, given the conventional view on the reliance on the printing press, that is not the course of action which I would like to adopt.

Q: How do you address the issue then of devolving paper?

A: This is a temporary phenomenon if the growth of bank deposits accelerates. Next year, if our companies are able to raise more money through the GDR [global depository receipt] route, there will be less need for them to borrow domestically and there would be more room for government borrowings.

Q: Would you raise the cap on external commercial borrowings?

A: One problem has been that this year we have given approvals but people have not raised funds to that extent. That has accentuated to some extent the pressure on the balance of payments.

Q: If you were to look at the next three- or five-year timeframe, given the external pressures that you think the Indian economy might face, do you see the rupee holding its own, through a balance between capital inflow and the current account gap?

A: There was no necessity for the rupee to depreciate. It's all a function of the economic policies that this country pursues. Now if this country pursues policies where our inflation rate diverges very significantly from the world inflation rate, then in our own interest we should expect the rupee exchange rate to maintain the competitiveness roof our exports. If our export competitiveness is not maintained, if India does not have a good growth rate of exports, then we will also not be able to mobilise international capital, there will be a crisis of creditworthiness. So India has to keep a rupee exchange rate which would maintain the competitiveness of our exports at an adequate level. That's the primary concern. Whether there is a nominal depreciation or not depends on how the fiscal and monetary policy of the country is managed.

Q: What you are saying implies that what you need is a clear policy for the rupee, rather than just letting market forces operate.

A: In broad terms, the government stand only gives an indication...

Q: No, you can do more than that in India, since the markets are so thin.

A: Over a period of time we must get markets to develop the requisite depth, but in broad terms India should pursue an exchange rate policy which would maintain the competitiveness of our exports at an adequate level.

Q: You would see that as the main policy parameter.

A: In my view that is the most important consideration. Take Japan, for example. After the Meiji revolution they built up the economy by having an undervalued exchange rate. It is only in this country that we have this obsession, as though the exchange rate of the rupee is an indication of our manliness. It is something on which both the extreme right and the extreme left unite, like birth control, I think.

Q: Are you considering a proposal to retail government debt, since there is a problem in its wholesale marketing?

A: The Reserve Bank of India is the government's banker. I think the government has done a very poor job of marketing. The government has, for example, a very good asset in the form of a five-year paper called the 1987 relief bond. It is now offering 10 per cent rate of return. It is a very good investment I have been telling our chaps to advertise this, because not many people know that such a bond exists. So I think the government is notoriously poor in taking the initiative. I think we should look at other instruments to see that the government borrows in a non-inflationary manner.

Q: Are you likely to give assent to the demand that post offices be permitted to park their surplus funds in the call money markets?

A: No. The post of fine is losing money and they don't have any expertise for operating in the call money market. They are fascinated by the temporary situation in the call money market where the rates are ruling for one day at say 30-40 per cent. They then project that into the year that the rate will persist and thereby wipe out the postal deficit I think that is not sustainable.

Q: How have you changed in these past five years?

A: I think I used to get very depressed when lots of unfair criticism was made. I went through times when in Parliament in 1992 all the opposition leaders said that a breach of privilege motion should be moved against me. And said that I should be impeached because I sold the country's secrets to the international financial institutions. But since then I think I have learned to be more philosophical. One shouldn't be too pleased when one is praised and should not be too dejected when one is criticised.

Q: Did you expect to last five years?

A: When I became finance minister people told me that I was taking a great risk, that I won't last more than six months. But I thought it was a challenge and that one shouldn't miss the opportunity to contribute one's share in nation building. I had thought about what India needed at that time. In fact two months before I became finance minister, in a convocation address that I gave at IIM [Indian Institute of Management] Bangalore, I had set out what India needed at that particular time, and here was an opportunity for me and I was in such a happy position with the Prime Minister fully backing me, that was a godsend...

Q: Did he discuss economic policy with you before you assumed office?

A: I had no chance to discuss with him. I was only told to....

Q: Well, you had to be sure whether you were on the same wavelength?

A: I had known Mr Narasimha Rao before and I think he was doing the right thing for the country. In fact I had discussed paragraph by paragraph the seventh plan which I formulated as deputy chairman with him. He read every word of it and of that I had no doubt. But there was no chance to discuss quite frankly. And I did not get sufficient time also to think. The day before it was mentioned to me (that he might be asked to be finance minister) and then also I did not take it seriously. I thought it was only a possibility....

Q: PC Alexander proposed it to you?

A. I don't remember who. But the next day I was in my office (at the UGC [University Grants Commission]). The Prime Minister rang me up, why are you not here? Only then I thought it was a serious thing. The last five years have been marvelous. No finance minister....

Q: He did put pressure on you for extra spending.

A: On balance I would say that it was welcome pressure that he put on me, considering the difficulties that we got into. In my view we were wrongly being accused of being anti-poor. But at one time this perception was widely prevalent and some people were using it to split the Congress party on that issue and therefore I think the Prime Minister....

Q: But you were very upset at that time.

A: I may have been upset but I think on balance, on reflection, he was right on that point. There were also times, in the 1994-95 budget also, if we had not strengthened the social sector there would have been trouble for us and at that time of course I was not sufficiently aware of that. And the social programmes that we had worked out with the Prime Minister were fully supported. But I think he has been more right than I have been.

Q: If in 1991 you had been told that in 1996 you would be looking at the numbers you are looking at today in the economy, would you have said that this was not possible?

A: Well let me say that I have been pleasantly surprised. I am being absolutely truthful. We have done better than I had anticipated. You will recall, in my first press conference, I had said the country is in such great difficulties that you should not expect to see any positive turnaround in the next three years. But the economy turned round much sooner than I had anticipated. It is true that, as press commentators have said, we have been helped also by the fact that we haven't had a serious drought. But a lot of efforts have also been made in the restructuring of the policy, for reformulation and if in all this there is one feeling, then it is that credit goes to the Prime Minister. A minority government, the Babri Masjid [mosque], the bomb blast, then the Congress split and the way politics in this country has degenerated, nobody believes anybody can be honourable. Now through all this, to have maintained composure. As Kennedy said, it was grace under pressure.

Iran

Iran: Tehran Vote Count Complete; Nateq-Nuri, Fa'ezeh Hashemi Win

LD1403231296 Tehran IRNA in English
2237 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 14, IRNA — Counting of ballots for Majles candidates in Tehran, Shemiranat and Eslamshahr was complete Thursday night.

Of the total 2,444,415 ballots in the three constituencies 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri ranked first with 879,893 ballots for him followed by Mrs Fa'ezeh Hashemi-Bahremani with 852,609 ballots each winning one-third of the ballots for the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran.

Another 56 Majles candidates with smaller number of ballots in their names will have to run at the second tier of the elections for the Majles later on in order to fill up the 28 vacant seats for the three constituencies.

The following is the list of the top 10 with the highest number of votes in their name.

Full name	number of ballots
1. 'Ali-Akbar Nateq-Nuri	879,893
2. Fa'ezeh Hashemi-Bahremani	852,609
3. Seyyed 'Ali Akbar Abu-Torabi	804,057
4. 'Abbas Sheybani	764,978
5. Seyyed 'ali Akbar Musavi-Hoseyni	683,076
6. (Mrs) Marziyeh Vahid-Dastjerdi	616,223
7. Mohsen Mojtahed Shabestari	586,351
8. Hasan Rowhani	577,964
9. Mohammad Reza Bahonar	571,719
10. Mohammad 'Ali Movahedi	552,586

Of the total of 2,444,415, the highest number of votes (879,893) went to 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri and the lowest (124,079) to Ms Fatemeh Tughani.

Iran: 139 Candidates Elected to Majles on First Round

LD1403232296 Tehran IRNA in English
2305 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 14, IRNA — The total number of votes cast at 196 constituencies municipally in the elections for the Islamic Consultative [Assembly] was Thursday announced to have been 24,716,692 that was 32 per cent more than it had been for the previous Majles.

In the first tier of the elections, 139 candidates won the required one-third of the votes for getting in to the Majles, the remaining number having to run at the next phase of the elections. The Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran has 270 seats.

Candidates meeting the required quota in number of ballots in their name have been identified and elections at 66 constituencies are to be repeated in the second phase later on.

Head of the National Elections Commission, 'Ali Reza Tabesh, said here today that reports of the counting of the votes had been forwarded to the monitoring committee in each province for scrutiny pursuant to a constitutional provision.

Iran: Khamene'i Thanks Nation for Turnout in Majles Elections

LD1503114296 Tehran IRNA in English
1130 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 15, IRNA — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i on Friday [15 March] in a message thanked the Iranian nation for their massive participation in the last Friday Majles elections and said that the turnout disappointed the enemies.

The leader in this message added that awakened, dedicated and sincere nation of Iran by realizing the sensitivity of the present juncture and importance of the elections went to the polls and thus stunned, disappointed and angered the enemies of the nation and the country.

The leader of the revolution added that the enemies had embarked on massive and expensive propaganda aimed at making the Iranian nation pessimistic and indifferent and portraying the elections as not being genuine.

However, the Iranian electorates with their massive turnout, unprecedented in the past 17 years, defeated the enemies in the political front and gave another bitter lesson to the U.S. and other international plotters and the Zionists.

The supreme leader also thanked the efforts of the Interior Ministry, the Guardians Council and other organizations engaged in the election affairs, which held the elections in a healthy atmosphere.

The leader stressed that related organs should carefully study any complaint lodged concerning the elections.

Iran: Ban on Press in Election Headquarters 'Suspicious Act'

LD1403180096 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian
11 Mar p 2

["Ministry of Interior Bans Correspondents From Election Headquarters" — report by Political Desk]

[FBIS Translated Text] Correspondents from Tehran's morning and evening papers were banned yesterday by the Ministry of Interior from entering the election headquarters. This is a suspicious act by the ministry at a time when sensitive counting of the election results are under way and it is necessary for media correspondents to have the latest results.

The correspondents went to the public relations office of the Ministry of Interior but there was no official to answer them. Only correspondents from the Central News Unit and Islamic News Agency were allowed to enter.

Iran: KEYHAN Responds to Complaints of KAR-VA-KARGAR

LD1403192796 Tehran KEYHAN in Persian
7 Mar 96 p 2

["A Word With Our Friends at KAR-VA-KARGAR"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Our dear colleagues at the KAR-VA-KARGAR newspaper have complained and asked why KEYHAN has termed a recent KAR-VA-KARGAR election supplement that was distributed with the HAMSHAHRI newspapers, a "campaign advertisement." They have also said that "media aims to inform and advertising is a part of this goal."

Our brother's complaint is a source of surprise to us. They say that the "media aims to inform and advertising is a part of this goal" ... As you see our brothers confirm that the supplement was an advertisement! So why are they complaining? More surprising is the fact that our friends have claimed that KEYHAN has insulted KAR-VA-KARGAR by using the term "advertisement" instead of "supplement"!! We don't understand what insult our friends are talking about.

In today's KAR-VA-KARGAR issue there is an initial reference to the independence of KEYHAN. We thank our brothers for their favorable opinion. But then, they complain that "during the election campaign, KEYHAN supported the faction whose economic ideas it had claimed to oppose"!! We will leave the judgement to our readers. But we tell our brothers at KAR-VA-KARGAR that if they are so busy with election campaigning that they don't have the time to read KEYHAN, they should at least look at the very page which has been the source of complaint to find an item in criticism of the mentioned faction. There are many such examples in KEYHAN and we propose that our brothers should make their claims after a proper reading.

Anyway, the cause of the complaint by our brothers is not clear to us. We think that our friends have "another complaint" which they are not willing to spell out. Publishing a small news item in which the "supplement" is called a "campaign advertisement" is not an insult. They have themselves said that the "advertising is a part of the work of the media." So what is the problem?...

We believe that our friends at KAR-VA-KARGAR editorial are honest, hard working and pious people. We are particularly aware of the brilliant and revolutionary record of our dear brother, His Excellency Mr. 'Ali Rabi'i, and we pray for their success.

Iran: Editorial on Election Participation, Western Media Coverage

LD1403214796 Tehran RESALAT in Persian
9 Mar 96 p 1, 16

[Editorial by Mahmud Farshidi: "Glory of Solidarity"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The presence and cooperation of the people in all arenas of the society brings blessings and prosperity. However, one of the particularities of the presence of the people in political issues is its visual, clear, and proud manifestation which disappoints and disheartens the enemy. Seventeen years have passed since the victory of the revolution, which brought the gift of Islamic-style freedom for the Iranian people; still yesterday once more our nation, in a spectacular participation, demonstrated their policial awareness and commitment to the Islamic rule. The coin of this revolution as been minted in the name of the people and without their participation the revolution cannot live on. Therefore, the Islamic Republic, during its 17-year-life, has kept very close ties with the people by carrying out 17 elections. Nevertheless, there are those who still fail to discard from their thoughts the ill-omened inheritance of the shahs, that is, the concept of submitting to the domineering order in the world. They demonstrate this by their indifference toward the political events of their own country. By not going to the polls, they divest themselves of their rights. But the masses of our men, women, and youngsters have always shown their political growth and revolutionary sensitivity with regard to the determination of their country's fate.

By the way, did the dozens of foreign correspondents — who came to Iran ostensibly for the same reason — dare to see that reality and reflect it?! Or were their reports prepared beforehand as they were during the Algerian and Egyptian elections. They had orders to reflect those elections as the acme of freedom; by the same token, did they have orders to fail to see the outstanding turn out?! What is certain is that Islamic Iran put the world media through a gruelling test yesterday so that the world can once again assess the extent of their veracity and courage. [passage omitted]

Iran: Larijani Views Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

LD1403222496 Tehran IRIB Television Second Program Network in Persian 2005 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Studio interview with Mohammad-Javad Larijani, deputy chairman of Majles foreign affairs committee, by unidentified correspondent; from the "Political Roundtable" program — live or recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Correspondent] The first question: How do you assess the recent events in occupied Palestine?

[Larijani] In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. [passage omitted] Events that we witnessed last week in the world can be explained one way from the propaganda point of view and another way from the point of view of external reality. As for propaganda, we witnessed a desperation among the Zionist regime's political leaders and the American leaders in particular. On the other hand we witnessed some kind of opportunism; that is, the exploitation of the situation for various objectives, including attacks against the Islamic Republic. We have also witnessed propaganda against ourselves. As for the reasons for the propaganda, we must return to the events in the occupied territories and moves which the Muslims and the Palestinians undertook in defense of the Palestinian identity, in defense of the Palestinian nationality, and in defense of the Palestinian reality against the current events. The political leaders of Palestine, apparently, did not expect such activity and reaction from the Palestinians at all. They faced severe internal problems. At the same time, almost throughout the world the issue was raised that what had begun in the name of the peace process was coming to an end before getting anywhere. That piece of news must be considered to be very unpalatable for Mr. Clinton as well. He is in the election year. One of the main axes in which he has invested — his propaganda — is the Middle East issue. Naturally such events are tantamount to a coup de grace as far as he is concerned in the presidential elections. All these factors came together to give them the opportunity to make certain political moves.

I can summarize the objectives of those political moves. One: they had to suggest that there was international support, international exigency, a global spirit for promoting the so-called peace talks in the Middle East. The plan has not failed; things are continuing. Therefore they had to build up morale. On the other hand, they had somehow to relate the root of the issue to an element outside Palestine. That is because if the Palestinians were to be the movers they would surely have been dissatisfied with something and they would have had to be listened to. They want to hang it on a foreign element; therefore, they have to use terrorism and, for instance, accuse Iran, Syria, or anywhere else, in this regard.

Another point which can be discerned in the propaganda is the Zionist regime's opportunism. In the midst of all this, they have resolved a handful of things. For instance, the Arab regional states declared that they have lifted any difficulty or ban in trade with Israel. Of course, Israeli businessmen have been travelling to and from hotels in those countries for months now and Arab businessmen do the same in Tel Aviv. In any case, the Arabs used to have the decorum to keep the ban in some instances, at least ostensibly. Well, that has been lifted.

At the Sharm al-Shaykh summit — which in fact must be dubbed Islam's shame [play on words: sharm can mean shame in Persian] the Persian Gulf region Arab leaders, who so far had not had close dialogue with the Zionist regime, were present and shook hands with them there. Right there the Zionist prime minister was invited to visit some of the Persian Gulf regional states.

All those things mean that the Zionist regime was looking for opportunity. It seeks to gain what it wants during the fray and establish itself in the region. That is one of the most important objectives of the peace talks: that the Zionist regime should find a stronger foothold in the Middle East region, in the world of Islam and, in particular, in the Persian Gulf region.

That was a short review of the propaganda events and their interconnections.

[Correspondent] The Sharm al-Shaykh summit was held yesterday in Egypt. Did the summit following the aims that you mentioned or did it seek other complimentary goals?

[Larijani] The main organizers of the summit were the United States and the Zionist regime. Of course the Egyptian Government also had an interest because it was an international situation where it could find a place in the Middle East discussions. The Americans had clear goals for the summit. They wanted to tell the world that the peace negotiations were underway, that the Middle East peace process — which Clinton wants to bank on — was alive, and that there were good domestic conditions for the political leaders of the Zionist regime. They also wanted to pressure 'Arafat so that his police would do the things that the Zionist regime would have had to do with the Palestinians.

Another American aim was to force the Europeans in the summit to abandon their policy of dialogue with Iran and to follow the so-called policy of containment of Iran. Of course, even before coming to the conference, the Americans had come to the conclusion that this was unattainable. The European foreign ministers met recently in Palermo in Sicily where they discussed the issue — and they were quoted as saying certain things — and finally they insisted on the continuation of the policy of dialogue. The issue is very clear. The Europeans had earlier asked what the point of blaming Iran was. I think the best reason for the baselessness of the propaganda is that it is baseless! [passage omitted]

[Correspondent] There were different configurations in the summit. On the one hand there were the Americans, the British, and some European countries, and on the other hand there were some Arab countries. Certain Arab countries such as Syria which should have been present in the summit were missing. What was the reason for these configurations?

[Larijani] Maybe there were several reasons for it. First, they wanted to bring in the main Arab countries of the region according to the strategy envisioning the entrance and strengthening of Israel in the region. Second, they brought in the European countries. Here the United States was definitely asking the Europeans to express support for American policy on Palestinian movements. Some Middle Eastern countries which are not Arab, such as Turkey, also participated. This could have been under a more comprehensive plan through which the Americans were seeking a Middle Eastern and even a regional base for its policies. I very much doubt that this summit could have led to anything except propaganda. Of course, the Zionist regime and America are seeking to make a mechanism out of this summit that could later echo in the United Nations or other international organizations. However, it is doubtful if this was achieved. In fact the UN secretary general, using diplomatic tact in the summit, announced his dissatisfaction and said the place for such debates is at the United Nations. Maybe the Americans are seeking to start a movement that will be beneficial to them at the United Nations. I doubt if there could be any major achievement. [passage omitted]

Iran: Velayati Comments on Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

LD1403161796 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Affairs Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati returned to Tehran today after visits to Malaysia and Brunei.

In an interview with a number of reporters upon arrival, Velayati said bilateral and regional cooperation, as well as cooperation between ASEAN members and Central Asian countries, were discussed with the officials of both countries during the visits.

Referring to the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, he said: The Zionist regime and America showed once again that they are alone and isolated in their irrational approach to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran: Velayati Says Israel, U.S. 'Isolated' in Anti-Iranian Policy

LD1403182196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Returning from a trip to Malaysia and Brunei, Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati told the Central News Unit that he discussed bilateral, regional, and international cooperation during his trip, and that he concluded cooperation agreements with the countries of ASEAN, central Asia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States. He also said that the achievements of the trip included agreements for the expansion of Iran's economic relations with Malaysia and Brunei.

Referring to cooperation between Iran and Malaysia particularly within the Islamic Conference and the non-aligned summit [as heard], he said: Suitable agreements were reached regarding economic relations between the two countries and the volume of trade will increase significantly.

On the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, Velayati said it has been proved once again that the Zionist regime and its American supporters are isolated in their irrational anti-Iranian policy. Mr. Velayati said the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the main victims of terrorism, and no responsible government supports terrorism. He added that most of the governments do not accept the pressure that is being exerted on some countries under the pretext of combating terrorism, and this was evident in the outcome of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit.

Mr. Velayati referred to efforts by world arrogance to deny the rights of the Palestinian people, and he said a distinction must be made between the just efforts of the Palestinian people trying to obtain their rights, and the accusations that are being made by Israel and its supporters, because these accusations of terrorism are an effort to deny the rights of the Palestinian people.

Iran: Daily Assesses 'Hastily Convened' Sharm al-Shaykh Summit

NC1503080096 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 12 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Sharm al-Shaykh Summit: Putting the Cart Before the Horse"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Some 30 kings, presidents, prime ministers and other officials are to meet in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Shaykh tomorrow to discuss 'terrorism'.

The hastily-convened summit came after a series of bomb attacks rocked the capital of the Zionist regime, dealing a strong blow to the so-called Middle East peace process. The prime objective of the summit is, therefore, to boost the morale of the Zionist regime's security agencies, which have been badly demoralized and disheartened by the recent incidents.

As a token of Washington's solidarity with Israel, at the end of the summit, Bill Clinton is to fly to Bayt al-Maqdis where he will be the first foreign leader to attend a session of Israel's inner security cabinet.

According to Israeli officials, Clinton will be accompanied to the Sharm al—Shaykh gathering by the Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John Deutch, and top officials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and U.S. military intelligence agencies.

The U.S. and Israel will also sign an agreement for closer cooperation on security affairs. A second agreement on broader strategic cooperation is to be signed during a visit by Peres to Afghanistan in late April, a month ahead of the Israeli elections. The document would involve the U.S. pledges to ensure that Israel will maintain a qualitative military advantage over its Arab neighbors.

On the whole, these facts will be enough to convince the Arabs and those who will participate in the summit that the motive behind the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting is not to find out the root cause of the problems in the occupied territories.

The meeting will probably come out with rhetoric condemning terrorism and offer no down-to-earth solutions to the plight of the displaced and oppressed Palestinians. Yet, holding the summit will definitely be interpreted by the Zionist regime as a sign of solidarity of the participants with its inhuman and expansionist policies.

Consequently, holding the summit meeting will by no doubt encourage Israel in its hegemonic policies, making the regional crisis more complicated than ever before.

If the U.S.—the sponsor of the summit—is really interested in resolving the issue of security in the Middle East, it should convene a meeting attended by all concerned parties, including Palestinians and non-Palestinians, so as to devise a realistic peace plan for the region.

As long as the real owners of Palestine, the oppressed Palestinians, and their Arab neighbors are not fully involved in the Middle East peace process, the region will not enjoy peace and tranquility.

Iran: Summit Seen as 'Solidarity' With Israel

NC1503075196 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 12 Mar 96 pp 1, 15

[Editorial: "Cairo's Assignment to Boost the Morale of the Zionist Usurpers!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.

The seething wave of opposition to the meeting of the terrorist leaders at Sharm al-Shaykh and declarations of hatred for the Cairo regime for its cooperation with the Zionists are mounting daily. By holding this cosmetic session in Egypt, Washington is seeking to extricate the Zionists from their present defensive position.

In fact, the Sharm al-Shaykh session is to proclaim solidarity with the Zionists so that the very demoralizing effects of the recent explosions on the Zionists can be mitigated to a certain extent. This is important because the recent explosions, along with concomitant repercussions, have made even the leaders of the Zionist regime very pessimistic and made them retreat into their shells.

The Sharm al-Shaykh session is a hasty step to raise the Zionists' morale. Due to pressure from the Zionist circles in the United States, Clinton was obliged first to attend the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and then to visit occupied Jerusalem and participate in the Israeli Cabinet's session on security.

Therefore, the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting and Clinton's participation in the Israeli Cabinet's session on security are two sides of the same coin. The meaning of this becomes clearer if viewed against the backdrop of the joint actions by the United States and Israel to extricate the Zionists from their present politico-propaganda isolation.

We should not forget that the recent incidents in occupied Palestine were not simply explosions but evidence of the extent of Israel's vulnerability and the Zionists' impotence in the face of the Palestinians' reprisals. As the Zionist regime's leaders see it, these explosions have shaken the pillars of the Israeli Government. They have proved that if the forces opposed to usurpation remain steadfast and determined enough to inflict retaliatory blows, Israel's vulnerability is obvious.

Not only will such phenomena harm the Zionist occupationists and their despicable supporters, even the half-baked Arab-Israeli compromise talks will be subject to ridicule, as we are currently seeing.

The fallout and repercussions from the recent blows inflicted by the Palestinians are so extensive that Israel has lost its capability for logical and sensible decision making. Instead of seeking to expedite the compromise process with Syria, Israel has unilaterally walked away from the negotiation table and disrupted the compromise talks.

Thus, the antiusurper fighters are closer to their goals. They have been able to impose their will on the usurping enemy and to make him pessimistic regarding the progress of the talks. If this trend continues it could throw doubt on the credibility of the batch of compromise accords that have already been signed and prove to the compromising parties that they are mere tools in the shameful process of compromise with the usurpers. Not only have they not gained anything, they will also lose whatever they already had.

This is precisely why the Zionist circles in the United States have now joined the effort to boost the morale of the criminal Zionists of Israel and insist that "this session should be held in Egypt to show the world and the regional countries that Israel is not, so to speak, isolated in the region and the world and that the heads of the Western and even Arab countries express solidarity with the usurpers. [no closing quote marks as published]

This is the greatest act of treachery committed by the Cairo regime since the signing of the disgraceful Camp David accord, because it has assumed the assignment of extricating the usurpers from their current politico-propaganda impasse and restoring their dominance of the destiny of the Arab world. Of course, the Cairo regime is alone in this venture and will not be successful. Even the presence of some disreputable Arab shaykhs will not change anything to help the Zionist occupiers.

This time the Zionists and the United States are well aware that things are quite different from in the past and that the Zionist usurpers are not pitted against some atrophied and hollow regimes that have no popular base. Today, the usurpers are grappling with a great movement with roots deep in the heart of Palestinian society. They are confronting people willing to sacrifice their lives and drink of the elixir of martyrdom in order to inflict retribution on the occupiers and destroy all the obstacles in the path of the Palestinian people's victory.

The United States and Israel are trying futilely to attribute this monumental martyrdom-seeking movement to external sources beyond the borders of occupied Palestine. Even international Zionism's propaganda efforts to show solidarity with the usurpers have had unfavorable results, by motivating the Palestinian people to foil these plots and boosting their zeal and determination even further.

This is a very pleasing development for the youthful Palestinians. By carrying out a few martyrdom-seeking operations against the usurpists they have been able to upset the balance of forces in occupied Palestine in a way that has made the United States feel threatened and the U.S. president to come to the region and personally hold a session of the Israeli Cabinet in order to find suitable security measures.

The Palestinian youth have been able to drag their true enemy, the United States, into the arena and have been instrumental in making the United States drop its guise and take an active part without any pretenses, and forcing the U.S. President to directly take over the administration of occupied Palestine's affairs. This is extremely heartening for the Palestinian youth and lets them recognize the true nature of the enemy. It will make them even more determined to inflict new blows on the savage usurpers.

Accordingly, the antioccupationist struggles in occupied Palestine are poised on a new path and the combatant Palestinian youth will continue their struggle against the occupationists with even greater hope and determination. However, this phenomenon is also a warning to the Arab courts to distance themselves from the Zionist usurpers as soon as possible and to realize that the Zionist occupiers have no future in the region.

Iran: Editorial Says 'Root Cause' of Crisis Should Be Removed

NC1503114796 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 6 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Justice, the Only Solution to Crisis in Occupied Territories"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In a week four bomb blasts kill 67 Israelis and injure scores. Who are the killers? Why do they kill? The answer to these questions is not easy if we do not try to find the root of the problem.

Killing innocent people is forbidden in Islam. Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], which is accused of being behind the bombings in Israel, is aware of Islamic teachings. Then why should they resort to such acts?

The answer is simple: Israel has occupied their land, imprisoned those who raise their voices, broken their bones in front of reporters' cameras, and practically closed all means to peaceful protest.

Instead of trying to remove the root cause of the crisis, Israeli and U.S. officials try to point fingers at other countries as the main cause of the ongoing problem.

Iran is a chief victim of terrorism and has condemned terrorism in all its forms. Unless Israeli state terrorism is stopped the problem will not be settled.

The best solution to the crisis in occupied territories is a comprehensive peace plan providing for full vindication of the rights of the Palestinian people.

If all Palestinian groups are not included in the negotiations, we cannot expect peace in the region. When there is no peace, one should expect further violence and killings in the future.

Iran: Daily Calls For 'Defamation Suit' Against U.S.

NC1503084296 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 9 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Time To Lodge Defamation Suit Against Washington, Tel Aviv"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The European Union is to meet today and tomorrow to study the allegations of the United States claiming that Iran was behind the bombings in Israel.

Fortunately, most of the EU members have realized that the U.S. approach to certain issues like the human rights and terrorism stems from the Washington's biased attitude. They have also found out that, in a bid to isolate its trade partners, the U.S. has completely done away with altruism, resorting to any possible means to outstrip its emergent economic partners in the context of the new world order.

The two points mentioned above are encouraging because one can see that the world does not blindly submit to the U.S. ballyhoo and the Zionist regime's baseless allegations.

We welcome the EU initiative because Iran's record is clear. Indeed, even the U.S. officials in their private parleys accept that Iran is neither involved in international terrorism nor does it try to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iranian officials have time and again reiterated that Iran is the chief victim of terrorism. They have also categorically denied any role in the bombings that have killed innocent people.

Although Washington has always turned a deaf ear to the statements of Iranian officials, our friends in the EU are rational enough not to surrender to baseless allegations leveled by the Zionist circles.

The German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, on Thursday [7 March] rejected a call by Shim'on Peres to stop Germany's dialogue with Iran in response to bombings in the Jewish state. Kinkel's rational stand is commendable, his statement admirable: There was no evidence so far that Iran was involved in the four suicide bombings by Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement].

We are not supposed to plead not guilty. In order to achieve their malicious objectives, the U.S. and Israel create suspicions that Iran supports terrorism. They do not have even a single piece of substantive evidence to support their accusations. If they could provide the slightest evidence, we are sure, they would have given rise to unprecedented ballyhoo.

In his meeting with Boris Yeltsin this summer, Bill Clinton failed to persuade Russia out of cooperating with Iran due to lack of solid evidence.

Our friends in the EU should bear in mind that it is not our duty to dispel suspicions created by Washington and Tel Aviv aimed at overshadowing their internal problems.

It should be the other way round. The ball is in the courts of the U.S. and Israel. They should provide evidence to support their baseless allegations. We are sure they will fail to do so.

It is time for the Iranian nation to call on the officials to lodge a defamation suit with the International Court of Justice against Washington and Tel Aviv.

Iran: 'Arrogant' U.S. Military Presence in Middle East Scored

NC1503114496 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 10 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "The Making of an Arrogant Power"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The report from AFP reads: "Thirty-four U.S. combat aircraft to be deployed soon in Jordan will take part in patrolling the air exclusion zone over southern Iraq..." It continues: "Twelve F-15 planes, eighteen F-16s, and four KC-135 refuelling aircraft would be deployed in Jordan in April or June to help support the peace process and regional security."

In the first place, which peace process? Is there a peace process we don't know about? Here is what the United States of America calls the "peace process": take Palestinian land, give it to the Jews, confirm to them that they are "the chosen" people, take Bayt al-Maqdis [Jerusalem] which is sacred to the Jews, Christians and Muslims, sanctify it as the official capital of Israel by voting to move the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv.

Now call it peace.

It takes a certain kind of mind to do this and call it "peace". That kind of mind we call arrogant.

His Arrogance wants to support the "peace process and regional security". He is worried about the Middle East's regional security.

The eastern coast of the United States is about 9,000 miles away from the Middle East. What kind of government is worried about security 9,000 miles away? The kind of government which thinks it owns the whole world. It wants security in the Middle East because it wants Middle East oil, and because it has to satisfy Jewish lobbies within the United States.

What kind of government wishes to take control of a region 9,000 miles away, disregarding the fact that it is the regional countries which must attend to their own interests and security? The kind of government that is arrogant. The kind of power which took its land from the American Indians and claimed it for itself, and now wishes to claim everything else and pretends to be in support of human rights all over the world.

Amen!

Iran: Hamas Leader Says 'Arafat's Campaign 'Will Change Nothing'

BR1503121396 Madrid EL PAIS in Spanish 15 Mar 96 p 5

[Report by Juan Carlos Gumucio: "Bombs Against Occupation"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran — [Hamas representative in Iran] Usama Jamdan [name as published] arrived punctually for our meeting in a Tehran city-center hotel. With a carefully tended beard and a dark, crisply ironed suit, he looks more like an Iranian bureaucrat on his way up the ladder. He is not yet 40, and only when he smiles, as he does frequently, do you notice any wrinkles on his cheeks. It is hard to believe that this smart and courteous Palestinian with impeccable English could be one of the most wanted men in Israel and, since Wednesday's [13 March] Sharm al-Shaykh summit, is certainly wanted by the American secret service and the secret services of many other governments, including that of Yasir 'Arafat.

Jamdan is the Hamas representative in Iran and one of the very few visible exponents of the group whose suicide bombers are undermining the Middle East peace process. In Tehran, where he has been held in high esteem since he was deported by the Israelis in 1991, he is like a fish in water. This is undoubtedly a reflection of Iran's "moral support" for Hamas.

In a passionate prologue in defense of the armed struggle of the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem against Israeli occupation he says: "We are fighting for our freedom and yet we are being called terrorists. Perhaps the French resistance did not plant bombs during the Nazi occupation? They did, but only the Nazis, only the Germans described them as terrorists. The bombs are an instrument of our fight against the occupation of Palestine, something that in itself is a form of terrorism that nobody wants to recognize."

Anything Goes

In Jamdan's world any Israeli target is a valid one now: buses, stations, and streets. In the interview he gave to EL PAIS he said: "At first we just attacked military targets, but when the Israelis began to vent their anger on the civilian population we had to pay them back in kind. We warned the Israelis and they took no notice. We told them that if they continued killing our people then they would have to face the consequences."

According to Jamdan, when the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Fathi al-Shaqaqi was assassinated by Israeli agents in Malta in October, Hamas refused to launch reprisals. Through indirect channels, the Israelis had told them that he would be the last figure to be killed. However, in January they planted a bomb in the portable phone of Palestinian guerrilla leader Yahya 'Ayyash, the legendary "Engineer," thereby leaving one of the most active and specialist Hamas military cells leaderless. This crime, Jamdan said, was the final straw. The wave of attacks in Israel must be seen from this point of view, he added.

Jamdan claims he is not bothered by the Sharm al-Shaykh summit because "it is just an American-Israeli propaganda maneuver against the Palestine liberation movement." Washington, he explains, is seeking to support Shim'on Peres' government before the Israeli elections of 29 May. In the United States, the perspective of a victory for the Right-wing Likud gives great cause for concern because it jeopardizes the whole peace process.

However, with each bombing, the Likud's popularity in Israel rises. Should that not give the Palestinians themselves cause for concern? Jamdan replies: "Not at all, because for us Peres and Netanyahu are one and the same. Perhaps their tactics are different, but their strategy is identical. They are basically one and the same." Jamdan insinuates that 'Arafat is dangerously playing Israel's game.

He claims that 'Arafat's police have detained "more than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank in the past week." They are not all Hamas members or sympathizers "but 'Arafat feels he must demonstrate his efficiency to Israel and the United States. He adds: "'Arafat is taking the first steps on the path to becoming a new Antoine Lahd," referring to the head of the armed pro-Israeli police force, funded by Israel in South Lebanon. 'Arafat's campaign against Hamas "could be stepped up, but it will change nothing." Nor will it provoke a confrontation between Hamas militants and the forces of the Palestinian National Authority. Jamdan says: "We are not going to fall into that trap. For us, the most important thing is to continue our fight against the Israeli occupation. That is our priority. We will not lower our guard and we will not surrender our weapons to 'Arafat. Our fight is continuing."

Iran: Commentary Criticizes Clinton's Visit to Israel

LD1403205896 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1702 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] U.S. President Bill Clinton, after landing at Tel Aviv airport, said: I have come here with great sorrow in order to reactivate the peace process. He stressed: My efforts are aimed at reviving the peace process and returning security to Israel. Clinton's remarks and particularly his use of phrases, such as 'efforts to reactivate the peace process' or 'efforts to revive the peace process,' indicate that the Democrats ruling America have come to believe that the Middle East compromise process is halted. This is the compromise process whose success they considered to be the only instance of foreign success in the three-and-a-half-year period of the Democratic presence in the White House.

Of course, while confessing the failure of the compromise process, Clinton did not make any reference to Tel Aviv's opposing side, and, by stressing the security of the Zionist regime, clearly left his own artificial mediation framework, one which he advocated. Clearly, Clinton's taking part in the Zionist regime's security meeting and allocating a further $100 million for suppressing the Palestinians are actions which cannot be construed as mediatory or as peace-seeking moves, even by the most dependent of the Arab regimes. That is particularly so when the inexperienced U.S. President is the first foreign official who has taken part in a Zionist regime cabinet meeting and thus has set out the wrong course onto which America has now hurled itself in an ill-considered and reckless manner after many years of caution.

In fact, Clinton has imagined that his presence in Tel Aviv and his redeclaration of support for the Zionist regime is a move which will be judged only by Zionist circles and that they will, in proportion to his devotion to the aggressive Zionist objectives, pave the propaganda grounds for the Democrats' repeated victory in the upcoming U.S. elections. He is oblivious to the point that the presence of the U.S. President in Tel Aviv is an event which will be known by Islamic nations and world public opinion, and his declaration of all-round support for the Zionist regime will be taken by them as proof for the imposed nature of the Middle East compromise process.

In fact, what the Islamic nations and the aware and free people of the world have to say is that a compromise which comes from one of the involved parties in a dispute is not one that can last several weeks or months. That is, where the Middle East compromise is concerned, the U.S. President and that country's Democratic administration have come to the support of a regime—all of whose territories have been occupied through military and terrorist action. In fact, that is why Clinton's visit to Tel Aviv is taken to mean America is confronting 53 Islamic countries in the world and the more than one billion Muslims in those states. That visit will bring about further aversion by the Islamic communities toward the American ringleaders and will be detrimental to America in the medium and long term future.

Iran: Egyptian Regime Serves Zionist 'Occupiers'

LD1403205596 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 11 Mar 96 p 1, 13

[Editorial: "Cairo Regime the Vanguard of Service to the Occupiers"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. The Cairo regime is once again in full service of international Zionism and is planning to hold a conference on the fight against terrorism in Sharm al-Shaykh. Of course, the Egyptian foreign minister has said that the summit is to provide support for the peace process with Israel and that the issue of terrorism is of no concern.

The fact that the Cairo regime insists on peace with the occupiers and the United States is talking about the fight against terrorism makes no change in the story and there is no contradiction. In fact "peace with the occupiers" and "the fight with the forces challenging the occupation" are the two sides of the same coin. Thus the United States and the Cairo regime have referred to the various aspects of the same issue and are not contradicting each other.

Through this trickery the Cairo regime seeks to make a peaceful gesture while cooperating with the occupiers so as not to be accused of opposition to the Palestinians. Everyone knows that the Cairo regime has always been in the vanguard of serving the Zionists and occupiers.

Now that the Zionists have fallen into a reactive position and are confused about their war against the Islamic movement of Palestine, the Cairo regime seeks to serve the occupiers against the people of Palestine. [passage omitted]

Iran: Velayati Says Iran Interested in Holding Talks With EU

LD1503115996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Sharm al-Shaykh summit was an effort by the United States and the Zionist regime to distract world public opinion from domestic problems. In an interview last night with a correspondent of French TV, Foreign Minister Velayati said: The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the main victim of terrorism, believes in and abides by the UN Charter and the human principle of fighting terrorism. If effective steps are to be taken in the fight against terrorism, these steps should be taken within the framework of international organizations, without prejudice or discrimination.

Stressing the Islamic Republic of Iran's continuing support for the righteous struggle of the Palestinian people, he said: Supporting a people who are fighting for the restoration of their rights is the duty of all the peoples of the globe. Such a struggle is sacred in principle; one cannot call this terrorism.

Our country's foreign minister went on to refer to French President Jacques Chirac's recent remarks — in which he said that the European countries, unlike the United States, are keen to continue talks with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Velayati said: We, too, support negotiations and announce that it is impossible to isolate the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is what the United States wants.

Iran: Envoy Comments on EU Decision To Send Delegation to Tehran

LD1303130696 Tehran IRNA in English 1056 GMT 13 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 13, IRNA — The fresh move of the European Union (EU) was a response to the letter sent by Iran in 1993 to 15 heads of state, said Iranian Ambassador to Germany Seyyed Hoseyn Musavian, referring to a decision made by the EU to send a three-man delegation to Tehran for talks with Iranian officials.

In an interview with the English daily IRAN NEWS printed Wednesday, he stressed, "terrorism and violence must not be tolerated by anyone, anywhere or in any form," noting that if the EU suggested that Iran embarked on a fight against terrorism, then this exactly conformed with the intent expressed by Tehran since 1993.

Recalling President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani's letter to heads of state of EU countries in 1993, where he proposed that European leaders cooperate with Iran in seriously and continuously combatting terrorism on the regional and international levels, he noted, "now, the EU, in sending its delegation to Iran, is welcoming Rafsanjani's proposal of two years ago."

While acknowledging that the visit of the delegation to Tehran is in line with the frequent dialogs conducted by Iran and the EU, however, Musavian warned that Tehran will not accept double standards in the fight against terrorism, an attitude which he said the West has been following.

"Iran condemns terrorism whatever its form and whoever commits it," he underlined, adding that if this was also the concept of the West, then Iran would be more than happy to extend assistance to the EU to combat this global menace.

Iran: Editorial—Iran To Be EU 'Partner' Against Terrorism

LD1403153896 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 10 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Another Slap in the Face of the United States"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] European Union yesterday declared that it will not bow to United States pressure and abandon its 'critical dialogue' with Iran in protest at Iran's alleged support for Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement].

For the last few days, the United States and Israel had accelerated their anti-Iran propaganda. During the peak of anti-Iranian propaganda by U.S. and its satellite, Israel, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and his Iranian counterpart 'Ali Akbar Velayati had exchanged messages focusing on the baseless allegations against the Islamic Republic.

Kinkel on Thursday [7 March] announced that the 15-member European Union will hold 'informal discussions' in Palermo, Italy, regarding the charges of Iranian Government's involvement in four attacks in Israel since Feb. 25.

Political circles in Iran attached great importance to the exchange of messages between Velayati and Kinkel on the eve of the EU meeting. They believe that Velayati, in his message, had reiterated to Kinkel Iran's firm policy against terrorism and had also elaborated on the ongoing dialogue between the Islamic Republic and the EU.

Iran, from the very beginning of the dialogue with the EU, expressed its readiness to be a true partner in combating terror tactics and terrorism.

Iran's stand against terrorism is quite natural as the Islamic Republic, more than any other country in the world, has been victimized by terrorists and has lost a great many of its high-level politico-religious personalities to perpetrators of terrorist acts.

What Iran is opposed to is the current atmosphere which advocates taking measures against 'selective terrorism'. Iran rejects the idea of taking anti-terrorism measures and holding conferences aimed at just one particular brand of terrorism while totally ignoring other activities of the same kind such as those committed by the Zionists in the occupied Arab lands or by the MKO [Mojahedin-e Khaleq Organization] in the newly born Islamic Republic. Iran considers this to be a 'double standard' on the part of its advocates.

Slapping the U.S. in the face, EU made it clear that major European powers — Britain, France and Germany — are not convinced that Iran is involved in the Hamas bombings, as U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has alleged. "If there is proof, let them show us it," a French diplomat hit back at the U.S. and the Zionist regime.

German foreign minister, during his visit to Israel last week, asked Israel to provide any evidence of direct or indirect Iranian involvement in the Hamas bombings. The Israeli officials failed to do so.

Once more, it should be made clear to the world that Iran is quite ready to play its due role for peace and stability in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.

Iran is ready to join hands with the EU for combating terrorism, not selectively, but bravely, and on the basis of overt policy and according to international law.

This is not something new. The Islamic Republic has repeatedly made its anti-terrorism stand public through all available international fora.

Yesterday's EU announcement is one more slap in the face of the United States.

Iran: EU Meeting on Iranian Involvement Viewed

LD1503103596 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 9 Mar 96 p2

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The European Union is to meet today and tomorrow to study the allegations of the United States claiming that Iran was behind the bombings in Israel.

Fortunately, most of the EU members have realized that the United States approach to certain issues like the human rights and terrorism stems from the Washington's biased attitude. They have also found out that, in a bid to isolate its trade partners, the United States has completely done away with altruism, resorting to any possible means to outstrip its emergent economic partners in the context of the new world order.

The two points mentioned above are encouraging because one can see that the world does not blindly submit to the U.S. ballyhoo and the Zionist regime's baseless allegations.

We welcome the EU initiative because Iran's record is clear. Indeed, even the U.S. officials in their private parleys accept that Iran is neither involved in international terrorism nor does it try to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iranian officials have time and again reiterated that Iran is the chief victim of terrorism. They have also categorically denied any role in the bombings that have killed innocent people.

Although Washington has always turned a deaf ear to the statements of Iranian officials, our friends in the EU are rational enough not to surrender to baseless allegations leveled by the Zionist circles.

The German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, on Thursday [14 March] rejected a call by Shim'on Peres to stop Germany's dialogue with Iran in response to bombings in the Jewish state. Kinkel's rational stand is commendable, his statement admirable: There was no evidence so far that Iran was involved in the four suicide bombings by Hamas.

We are not supposed to plead not guilty. In order to achieve their malicious objectives, the U.S. and Israel create suspicions that Iran supports terrorism. They do not have even a single piece of substantive evidence to support their accusations. If they could provide the slightest evidence, we are sure, they would have given rise to unprecedented ballyhoo.

In his meeting with Boris Yeltsin this summer, Bill Clinton failed to persuade Russia out of cooperating with Iran due to lack of solid evidence.

Our friends in the EU should bear in mind that it is not our duty to dispel suspicions created by Washington and Tel Aviv aimed at overshadowing their internal problems.

It should be the other way round. The ball is in the courts of the U.S. and Israel. They should provide evidence to support their baseless allegations. We are sure they will fail to do so.

It is time for the Iranian nation to call on the officials to lodge a defamation suit with the International Court of Justice against Washington and Tel Aviv.

Iran: Nateq-Nuri on U.S. 'Bullying,' Need for Vigilance

LD1303205796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 13 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Law Enforcement Academy graduation ceremony was carried out in the presence of Mr. Nateq-Nuri, the Majles speaker, in Tehran this afternoon.

According to a report by a Central News Unit correspondent, in his address at the ceremony, the Majles Speaker honored the memory of the worthy martyrs of the Islamic revolution and the heroes of the eight years of holy defense, particularly the Law Enforcement Forces' martyrs. He praised the force for its vigilance and efforts during the recent Majles elections and thanked them. [passage omitted]

Recalling the crucial responsibility of the Law Enforcement Forces in various fields and in all the corners of the country, he referred to the allocation of multi-million dollar budgets by the U.S. Congress aimed at strengthening the opponents of the Islamic Republic of Iran to interfere in various affairs of our country. He said: All that is because the sovereignty of religion and Islamic values in Iran. Nevertheless, he said, vigilance must always be kept and ominous conspiracies of the world arrogance must be confronted through reliance on God.

He added: What annoys the enemy is the independence of Iran, the self-confidence of the people, and their total faith in Islam, the revolution, and the authorities of the Islamic Republic, particularly the exalted leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Referring to the proper and sincere cooperation by the Law Enforcement Forces with the Majles in removing satellite dishes, he said: World arrogance has always tried, through various ploys, to create a distance between the people and the authorities as well as the Islamic values — particularly the holy aspirations of the Imam [Ayatollah Khomeyni] and the leader [Ayatollah Khamene'i]. But the heroic Iranian nation will never retreat in the face of America's bullying and in its defense of Islamic principles will await its leader's commands.

Iran: Tehran Ready To 'Join Hands' With Cairo, Riyadh

NC1403153196 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 13 Mar 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Expansion of Relations With Riyadh and Cairo Is in the Interest of Third World"—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Talking to newsmen, President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, said on Monday [11 March] that Iran is willing to have best possible relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia are Muslim countries and can play a significant role in Islamic as well as Third World countries. From the very beginning of the culmination the Islamic Revolution in Iran, one of the pillars of Iran's foreign policy has been close cooperation with the Third World countries.

Under the late Gamal 'Abd-al-Nasir, Egypt was one of the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The movement played a very crucial role in thwarting pressures from the two poles of the bipolar world order throughout the Cold War.

Saudi Arabia is the custodian of the two sanctum sanctorums of Muslims, i.e., Mecca and Medina. Besides, geographically, Saudi Arabia is a large littoral state of the Persian Gulf. It possesses one of the richest world's oil reservoirs and is the world's biggest oil exporter. The Saudi financial stamina is a major force in international equations. If this force is used for the interest of the Third World and the Islamic world, it can play a significant role in protecting their interests.

Our brothers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia should not forget that regional cooperation is a necessity of the prevailing world order. If we do not shun difference, we will have to pay a heavy price for disunity. Virtually the enemies with vested interests would try to plant against each other in order to divide and rule. President Rafsanjani has sent the ball into the Saudi and Egypt's courts. As a gesture of goodwill both the countries should prove in practice that they don't tread on Washington's heels. Tehran is ready to join hands with Riyadh and Cairo to protect the interests of the Third World.

Iran: Paper Urges Better Ties With Egypt, Saudi Arabia

LD1303095396 Tehran IRNA in English 0834 GMT 13 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 13, IRNA — Egypt and Saudi Arabia should not forget that regional cooperation is a necessity if Muslims are to prevail in the current world order, the English daily 'TEHRAN TIMES' wrote Wednesday.

Recalling president Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani's remarks during a press conference Monday that optimum relations with Cairo and Riyadh are in the interest of Iran, the editorial noted that the three countries are active members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and all belong to the third world.

"Iran's foreign policy since the victory of the revolution has focused on fostering closer relations with third world countries," it stressed, adding that a main rallying cry of the Islamic revolution was the suffering of oppressed peoples, be it political or economic, both in the domestic and international arenas.

Egypt is a founding country of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) while Saudi Arabia is the custodian of the two holy Muslim sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina, as well as being the largest of the Persian Gulf littoral states and the world's biggest supplier of oil, the article said.

Calling on Riyadh and Cairo to turn their backs to Washington's bullying, it emphasized that, "if we do not shun differences, we may have to pay a heavy price for disunity. Enemies with vested interests would naturally pit us against each other in order to divide us and rule over us."

It concluded by saying that Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt can be a powerful trio to protect third world and Muslim interests.

Iran: Daily Calls on Cairo, Riyadh for Regional Cooperation

LD1303112996 Tehran IRNA in English
1113 GMT 13 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 13, IRNA — Egypt and Saudi Arabia should not forget that regional cooperation is a necessity if Muslims are to prevail in the current world order, the English daily TEHRAN TIMES wrote Wednesday.

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It concluded by saying that Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt can be a powerful trio to protect Third World and Muslim interests.

Iran: Tehran Sees Benefit for Demirel After Visit to Israel

NC1303161296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkish 1630 GMT 12 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary: "President Suleyman Demirel's Visit to Tel Aviv"]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Suleyman Demirel arrived in Tel Aviv on 11 March on a three-day official visit to Israel. He will hold talks with 'Ezer Weizman on relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv and economic relations between Turkey and Israel. Meanwhile, President Demirel will attend the Sharm al-Shaykh conference on terrorism in Egypt. The conference was called by President Clinton.

Demirel has said that his visit to Tel Aviv is a good opportunity to improve relations between Turkey and Israel. It should be recalled that the two countries maintained very close relations on economic, political, and security matters in the past. Considering this, Demirel's visit to occupied Palestine is important for the officials in Tel Aviv. It has come at a time when the peace process in the Middle East has been threatened by the explosions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

It is common knowledge that Turkey is not regarded as a party to the peace process. Nevertheless, considering Turkey's important resources, including its transnational waters, officials in Tel Aviv hope that Ankara will play an effective role in the Middle East peace talks. However, many political experts have recalled Turkey's dispute with Syria over the Euphrates' waters and said that the situation between the two countries may deteriorate.

Turkey is important for the Zionist regime in Israel because of its water and other resources. In fact, Turkey has planned to export a very large quantity of water to Israel. This is important for the Zionist regime because Israel needs drinking and irrigation water, just like the Arab countries in the region. Considering this, many political observers believe that the question of water will be a key factor in the Middle East peace process. In fact, Turkish officials have described the transportation of water from Turkey to the Middle East countries as a project for friendship and peace. However, some of the Arab countries believe that Turkey's policy is aimed at achieving its political and economic objectives. They also believe that both Turkey and Israel want the question of water to have an important bearing on security in the region. Meanwhile, Turkey and the Zionist regime want to establish a common market.

Considering all that, President Demirel is expected to benefit from the Zionist influence on the sensitive political and economic centers in the world and try to secure Israel's support for Turkey at international forums.

Iran: Tehran Slams Turkish Press Accusations

NC1303161496 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkish 1630 GMT 12 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary: "Turkey's New Claims"]

[FBIS Translated Text] AFP reported that the director of police in Istanbul disclosed on Sunday that the suspect arrested for the murder of Cetin Emec, director of daily HURRIYET's publications, has revealed his contacts with Iran. Daily CUMHURIYET was quickly carried away by the disclosure, which was prompted by known circles. The newspaper claimed that the murderer received the gun he used to kill Emec from an Iranian diplomat.

The Iranian embassy in Ankara quickly refuted the accusations. It said that the Islamic Republic of Iran was definitely not involved in terrorist activities. However, the anti-Islamic trends in Turkey continue to maintain their unfounded claims. The political observers have assessed the unfounded reporting against Iran from various angles. Recalling the reaction in Turkey against President Suleyman Demirel's visit to occupied Palestine to hold talks with the officials in Tel Aviv, they said that they are convinced that the pro-Zionist newspapers in the country are trying to divert the Turkish people's attention from Turkey's relations with the Zionist regime.

Considering the Sharm al-Shaykh conference, many newspapers in Turkey have focused their attention on Iran, which the United States and the Zionists have condemned, and are trying to create the impression that Tehran is responsible not only for incidents in the occupied lands, but also for those that take place in Turkey. Obviously, they intend to prove their servility and try to help Suleyman Demirel gain advantages at the conference. Considering that, President Clinton's invitation to Demirel to visit the United States after the conference is interesting.

According to observers, the anti-Iran forces in the Turkish Administration have quickly moved to obstruct the initiatives that have been made to improve the relations between Ankara and Tehran by making unfounded claims against Iran. Their objective is to undermine rapprochement between the two Islamic and neighboring countries.

Undoubtedly, several conditions will be imposed on Ankara as a result of the Zionist regime's approach towards Turkey. Considering that, political observers are convinced that the unfounded and unrealistic propaganda against Iran is aimed at paving the way for that state of affairs. However, it must be stressed that similar initiatives are no longer valid. The Turkish people are well-aware of the objectives several circles want to achieve in Turkey. So, they will not be deceived by their claims. Consequently, the Turkish Government will not be able to secure the result it expects from its propaganda activities. God says in the Koran: Human beings, do not accept any information from a malicious person before you analyze it. Otherwise, a tribe of people may be unfairly treated.

So, we urge the Muslims and all those who act with common sense to be aware that those who make such claims are not only malicious elements, but also the instruments of international and diabolic organizations. They are drawing up designs. Considering that, we want to outline the following: They are drawing up designs. That is a fact. However, it must be known that God is drawing up a design against them. Undoubtedly, He is the most exalted of those who draw up designs [as heard].

Iran: Bosnian Minister Praises Iranian-Bosnian Relations

NC0803200896 Tehran ABRAR in Persian 4 Mar 96 pp 1-2

[From the Newsdesk]

[FBIS Translated Text] Relations between Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Islamic Republic of Iran should be revamped on the basis of new conditions that have emerged and should conform to the peace situation in the country.

Bosnian Prime Minister Dr. Hasan Muratovic was speaking to an ABRAR correspondent in an exclusive interview at Mehrabad Airport. Stating the above, he expressed pleasure at his visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran and said: The Islamic Republic is a friendly country that has done a lot to help our nation survive.

His visit to Iran was his first abroad since becoming prime minister. He added: Now that peace has been established in Bosnia- Herzegovina, the problems of old no longer exist.

Muratovic stressed: Currently, Bosnia-Herzegovina is trying to solve economic problems. On our visit to Tehran we intend to discuss economic cooperation with Iranian officials to rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Concluding, Dr. Muratovic expressed the hope that a joint communique would be signed defining bilateral economic relations and ties between the peoples of Iran and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Dr. Hasan Muratovic was welcomed by Fist Vice President Hasan Habibi at the Sa'dabad Palace in Tehran. In his interview Muratovic described the Dayton accord as "an unjust plan but better than war" and said he hoped that all the accord's clauses would be implemented in a coordinated manner so that durable peace might be achieved.

Iran: Daily Views Importance of Bosnian-Iranian Relations

NC1303221496 Tehran ABRAR in Persian 5 Mar 96 p 12

[Commentary by A. Fatah: "The Bosnian Nation Will Not Forget Its Friends"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. Hasan Muratovic, prime minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, arrived in Tehran at the head of a high-level economic delegation on Saturday night [2 March]. The objective of this visit is to strengthen bilateral relations and to discuss ways and means of cooperation for the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Iranian officials.

The fact that the first foreign visit by Muratovic soon after he assumed office was to the Islamic Republic of Iran, indicates Tehran's strategic importance in bilateral and multilateral relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Even though the visit by the Bosnian prime minister to Tehran is centered around promoting economic relations with Tehran there is no doubt that it is of considerable political importance as well. Currently, some of the countries which are members of NATO's peace- keeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina (IFOR) feel a sense of danger from the broadening of Tehran-Sarajevo's relations and are seeking to prevent the further proliferation of these relations. It is no secret for any of the countries how the Islamic Republic of Iran provided unstinting assistance to Sarajevo in the most difficult circumstances which boosted the resistance of the legitimate Bosnian government against the Serb dissidents.

Iran was the most innovative of all the countries in the Islamic Contact Group and staunchly defended the unilateral lifting of the arms embargo from Bosnia-Herzegovina throughout the course of the war. Tehran was even accused of violating the arms embargo which— regardless of the veracity or otherwise of the charge—indicates that the Islamic Republic of Iran did everything it could to save the lives of Bosnian Muslims.

Now that the war has ended in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian nation has not forgotten its true friends. All the officials of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina admit to the decisive role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the historic resistance of this country against the Serb aggressors and they will never succumb to the pressure of some foreign countries and turn their backs on their friends.

Dr. Muratovic's visit to Tehran proves that Sarajevo is endowed with its own independent will and even now it considers itself part of the vast corpus of the Islamic world despite the presence of 60,000 NATO soldiers on its soil. Despite the political dimensions of this visit, the Bosnian government is eager to benefit from the assistance and experiences of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the country's reconstruction.

According to international statistics, Bosnia-Herzegovina is in need of $6-10 billion worth of economic assistance for its reconstruction. This is due to the utter devastation of the country and the fact that the government cannot count on any form of national income. In such circumstances, Sarajevo is optimistic that its friends will not forget it and will continue their assistance as they did during the war and even increase it further.

On the other hand, the Bosnian echelons, and President Alija Izetbegovic in particular, are apprehensive of the unilateral affiliation of Sarajevo to the Western economic and military institutions and wish to maintain a political balance in Bosnia- Herzegovina by obtaining assistance from Islamic countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Of course, as the Bosnian administration believes, the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Bosnia-Herzegovina will in no way conflict with that of the

West. Iran has immense experience in postwar reconstruction and can contribute its expertise to expedite Bosnia's reconstruction. This is the most important factor that has brought Dr. Muratovic to Tehran immediately upon assuming the portfolio of prime minister.

Iran: Foreign Minister Velayati Departs for Malaysia, Brunei

LD1003062996 Tehran IRNA in English 0559 GMT 10 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 10, IRNA — Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati left for the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur Sunday morning to discuss bilateral relations and ways of speeding up implementation of agreements reached between the two countries.

Cooperation between the regional organizations of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be among major topics to be discussed by Velayati and senior Malaysian officials.

From Malaysia the Iranian minister will proceed to Brunei to discuss overall expansion of Tehran-Seri Begawan cooperation and to participate in the first session of joint economic commission.

Iran: Significance of Velayati's Visits to Malaysia, Brunei Noted

NC1103082596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0445 GMT 11 Mar 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Dr. 'Ali Akbar Velayati and his Malaysian counterpart will discuss expanding bilateral relations and following up on agreements between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Malaysia during their meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Velayati, who has gone to Malaysia with the intention of strengthening and elevating Iran's relations with Asian countries, will also discuss cooperation on international forums and in regional organizations, the ECO [Economic Cooperation Organization] and ASEAN, with his Malaysian counterpart.

Political observers say Velayati's visit to Kuala Lumpur is significant in view of the sincere bilateral relations and the two countries' role as active members of the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Nonaligned Movement. Close cooperation on regional and international issues and on issues such as the Bosnian problem is noteworthy. Political observers note the Iranian president's invitation to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamed to attend the inauguration of the vast Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan Railway project. They believe this extremely important route forms the ideal basis for fulfilling many bilateral and multilateral pacts and agreements signed between Iran and regional countries in the past.

Malaysia and the other countries in southeast Asia can use this route to gain easy access to the rest of Central Asia. The completion of the northern part of the Islamic Republic's railway and the nationwide railway network from the Persian Gulf to the northern border will facilitate contact between two important areas.

Our foreign minister's visit to Brunei, which will follow his visit to Malaysia, is part of the Islamic Republic's policy of looking at Islamic countries in southeast Asia. It is regarded as significant. This visit, being carried out to fulfill the two countries' wish for the all-aspected expansion of relations, keeps in mind the elevation of these relations, especially in the economic and trade fields in both the state and private sectors.

Iran: Tehran Radio Views Sheykholeslam's African Tour

LD1403181796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 14 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The deputy foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arab and African Affairs, Mr. Hoseyn Sheykholeslam, met with a number of senior officials of Madagascar in Antananarivo on 13 March. Prior to this, Mr. Sheykholeslam had visited some African states, including Mauritius and South Africa, conferring with the senior officials of those countries on mutual cooperation and international issues.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 introduced a new development in Iran's foreign policy and the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, being inspired by the Islamic teachings, gave priority to the establishment of ties with the Third World states, including those of Africa. According to those expert in the African affairs, the visit by the grand leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamene'i to a number of south African states in 1986, when acting as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was a turning point in the establishment of ties between Iran and African countries. In continuation of this process, today, too, Iran and the African states attach significance to reach mutual interests and promote the level of ties in various fields.

At the same time, it should be added that the policies of the enemies of the Islamic revolution, especially those of the Zionist regime and the United States, have been directed at souring Irano-African ties. For the Zionist regime and United States need to weaken Iran's status in the African continent to further stabilize their presence there and this is because of their aggressive nature.

Despite all such conspiracies, the Islamic Republic of Iran has done its best to further extend its political, cultural as well as economic ties with the African states. The reality shows that the African countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoy potential capacities to extend and strengthen ties due to their common interests in various political and trade fields. In view of these facts, informed political sources believe that the foreign policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the African countries should be directed at mutual interests and further reinforcement of political, economic, and cultural ties.

According to the same experts, exchange of diplomatic delegations, increasing international cooperation, mutual cultural understanding, as well as economic practices are some measures which can further strengthen ties between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the African countries. The visit by the deputy foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran to some African countries is evaluated as significant in this regard.

Iran: UN Official Praises Iran's Role in Tajik Peace Process

LD1003193996 Tehran IRNA in English
1831 GMT 10 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 10, IRNA — Deputy Secretary General of the UN Ismat Katani here Sunday [10 March] called on Iran help extend ceasefire in Tajikistan.

Katani, who made the plea in a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister for Euro-American Affairs Mahmoud Vazei here Sunday, said that he was commissioned by the UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus- Ghali to settle crisis in Tajikistan and underlined the important role of Iran in peacefully settling Tajikistan crisis.

He expressed hope that the proposal offered by Iran for extension of ceasefire in Tajikistan would draw the belligerent sides' consent.

Vazei for his part expressed sympathy with Tajikistan national [as received] and said that Iran's basic policy was based on helping restore peace and stability in the region, especially in Tajikistan, which shared deep commonalities with Iran.

He voiced Iran's readiness to help improve peace in Tajikistan and assist UN mission in Tajikistan get progress in fulfilling their mission.

He underlined making use of all facilities for restoration of peace in the republic.

The Iranian official highlighted efforts made so far for helping cessate crisis in Tajikistan during recent visit to the Commonwealth of Independent States of Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati.

Vazei thanked efforts made by Iran for establishment of tranquility in Tajikistan and announced its readiness to help in that regard.

Iran: Tehran Views ANAP-DYP Coalition, Demirel Visit to Israel

NC1103104096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkish 1630 GMT 7 Mar 96

[Unattributed commentary: "Mesut Yilmaz's Minority Government"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The multisided effort to prevent the Welfare Party [RP] from coming to power in Turkey, despite it emerging as the biggest party in the elections on 24 December, has succeeded. Motherland Party [ANAP] leader Mesut Yilmaz assumed the premiership after President Suleyman Demirel approved his minority government. True Path Party [DYP] leader Tansu Ciller will not be playin an active part in the government. Some 17 ministries, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been placed under DYP control. The ANAP will control 15 ministries, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, and Ministry of Finance.

Tansu Ciller will not be playing an active part in the joint government; she and Yilmaz have agreed on a rotating premiership. But political experts say their personal disputes have not ended. They also say they have been forced to establish a minority coalition through pressure by the United States, the rest of the Western countries, and the political, financial, industrial, and military circles in Turkey. Considering that, political experts note that the government that has been established will not survive long and will not solve the problems in the country.

Although the ANAP and the DYP have established a coalition they have not secured the support they need for the National Assembly's vote of confidence. They will have to be supported by the smaller parties in parliament. But that will be a handicap.

The ANAP-DYP coalition, established through Western pressure, must try to solve the country's economic problems. Turkey's foreign debts total over $75 billion and internal debts over $30 billion. Inflation is over 180 percent.

Undoubtedly, the coalition government will maintain its relations with the West, including the EU. Considering strengthening Islamic trends and the RP's success, the new government will most probably move to improve its relations with Israel. Experts have drawn a parallel between this and President Suleyman Demirel's visit to the occupied Palestinian land in the Middle East on 11 March.

Iran: Agreement Signed on Flights Between Mashhad, Ashgabat

LD1203181196 Tehran IRNA in English
1657 GMT 12 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mashhad, Khorasan Prov., March 12, IRNA - An agreement on setting up an air link between Mashhad and Ashgabat has recently been signed by the officials of Iranian and Turkmen airline officials.

According to the head of the local branch of Iranian airline Aseman, the flights of the two airlines are to start in two weeks.

He also noted that the officials of Iranian and Kazakh airlines have agreed to postpone establishment of regular flights between Mashhad and Almaty. He gave no details on the postponement agreement.

Iran: Khamene'i Sends Message to Ijtihad Congress

LD1403220696 Tehran IRNA in English
2101 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 14, IRNA — Leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i here on Thursday [14 March] paid glowing tribute to the late Imam Khomeyni who, he said, had brought about one of the most amazing and greatest phenomena in the history of Islam, that is establishment of the Islamic Republic.

In his message to a congress on the role of time and place in ijtihad, the supreme leader said if a government has been established on the basis of Islamic and divine beliefs in a world overwhelmed by various materialistic thoughts, it is due to the late imam's prudence, will and wisdom.

Ayatollah Khamene'i emphasized that the participants in the congress who are religious scholars should fully take into consideration the role of time and place in the interpretation of the Islamic laws (sharia). If this blessful source is recognized and emloyed properly, it will provide a tremendous background for human communities to benefit from the Islamic sharia, he added.

Once distinguished and came into force, it would serve as a ground reserve for the human communities.

The most common excuse used by those willing to deprive human communities of the guidance and benefits of the sharia is that religious rulings are rigid and inflexible facts incompatible with the dynamic and convertible current of life, the leader said.

"Such a statement, though made in some cases due to prejudice and disbelief in religion, sometimes originate from the ignorance and lack of knowledge of those who make it," the leader of the Islamic revolution pointed out. The fact set forth by the late imam is that the eternal current of sharia and jurisprudence is flowing to various aspects of life from its origin that is the relevation [as received], the supreme leader said.

"Recognizing the role of time and place should always be coupled with adherence to the principles of jurisprudence, which is a scientific procedure...this is what the late imam meant by saying that traditional jurisprudence is dynamic and in consistent with the demands of the time," Ayatollah Khamene'i said.

Iran: Jannati Gives Friday Prayer Sermon at Khomeyni Mausoleum

LD1503114596 Tehran IRNA in English
0945 GMT 15 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, March 15, IRNA — The substitute Friday [15 March] prayer leader of Tehran, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, referring to the recent threats of the U.S. and the Zionist regime against Iran, stressed that the Iranian nation is not afraid of any outside power.

He told worshipers that the Muslim nation of Iran, following the guidelines of the late Imam Khomeyni and under the wise leadership of Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, only fears God.

The Friday prayer congregation was held at the mausoleum of the late Imam Khomeyni, in southern Tehran and was attended by a huge number of worshipers.

Today marked the first anniversary of death of son of late Imam Khomeyni, Hojat ol-Eslam Ahmad Khomeyni which coincided with the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Sadeq (AS), the sixth imam of the household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Ayatollah Jannati, who is a member of the Guardians Council, in his first sermon elaborated on personality and role of Imam Sadeq (AS), the founder of Ja'fari

Fiqh, and his role in promoting Islam and thwarting plots of enemies who were after tarnishing the image of Islam.

Turning to late Hojat ol-Eslam Khomeyni, he said that Hojat ol-Eslam Khomeyni was "the eye and arm of the late imam" who acted as a link between the imam and the people.

He said that the imam had full trust in Hojat ol-Eslam Khomeyni. The late hojat ol-eslam contributed a great deal to compiling and preserving the works and essays of Imam Khomeyni, he added.

Elsewhere in the sermon, Ayatollah Jannati touched on the last Friday elections for the 270-seat Majlis and thanked the electorates who he said with their massive participation dealt another blow on the enemy.

The massive turnout further defamed the enemies and proved falsity of their propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The number of electorates who cast vote in the fifth Majlis elections was the highest, about 25 million. The increase in the turnout was far greater than the population gorwth rate, he told the gathering.

He also called for introduction of reforms to the election law to remove the existing problems.

The ayatollah expressed hope that the fifth Majlis will start work in late May.

Turning to international issues, he referred to the recent American bullying gestures and the ballyhoo over terrorism. He said Israel has kidnapped and martyred many, the latest of whom were Yahya Ayyash and Fathi al-Shaqaqi. "Do you have any doubt that these are not acts of terrorism and that Israel is not a terrorist?" he asked.

He further added that it is ironical that those who carry out terrorist acts neither consider themselves terrorists nor supporters of terrorism. "These hypocrites are trying to fool the world and drag certain weak and unpopular governments behind them," he told the congregation.

Directing his remarks to the friends of the Islamic revolution of Iran, the ayatollah said, "we should be afraid of God only and not the U.S. We do not expect other than this from an enemy who has been slapped in the face by Islam and has been humiliated by the late imam. Enemies are annoyed with the clenched fists of the Iranian nation. They are looking for weaknesses to pressure Iran."

However, the awakened Iranian nation which has the experience of the 1980-88 Iraqi-imposed war, under the leadership of the wise leader is not afraid of the U.S. "We rely on God and fear God Almighty only," he emphasized.

Ayatollah Jannati stressed that the Iranian nation will continue to tread on the path of the late imam and will not fear the U.S.

In conclusion the ayatollah referred to the approaching Iranian new year, Now Ruz, to be celebrated next Wednesday, and invited the Iranians to help the needy on this occasion and share with them their happiness.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Spokesman Comments on U.S.-China Tension Over Taiwan

BK1403153996 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 14 Mar 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A Foreign Office spokesman in Islamabad today said that Pakistan fully respects the principles of the sovereignty of states and has been pursuing a one-China policy. Commenting on the current tension between China and the United States over Taiwan, the spokesman said that under the three declarations signed with China, the United States has recognized China as one country. The spokesman expressed the hope that the two countries will maintain their relations on the basis of these very declarations.

Pakistan: Chiefs of Staff Discuss Defense Budget Proposals

BK1503093096 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 15 Mar 96 pp 1, 9

[Report by Shakil Shaikh]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — In the backdrop of 10 per cent increase in the Indian defence expenditure, Pakistan's defence managers have firmed up proposals for next fiscal year's budget keeping in view the "threat perception" and money required to "modernise" armed forces.

The defence budget proposals were taken up by the defence managers in the meeting of the Joint Chiefs Staff Committee (JCSC) held here Thursday. Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Air Chief Marshal Farooq Feroze Khan presided over the meeting. All the three services chiefs, and other high-ranking civil and military officers attended the discussion which lasted for several hours.

Informed sources say that the main item on the agenda was the finalisation of proposals concerning the defence budget for 1995-96.

The defence budget for the current year was around Rs [rupees] 115 billion, as no increase in real terms was made. However, the sources confirmed that the additional allocation of Rs2.3 billion in the defence spending has not yet provided to the forces.

Recently, the National Assembly was informed that an additional amount of Rs2.3 billion have been allocated in the defence budget.

Keeping in view the foreign exchange position and the overall financial constraints, the forces chiefs have informed the JCSC Chairman that the additional allocation of Rs2.3 billion was not enough and even it does not match the 7 to 9 per cent currency devaluation decision taken by the government.

"The three forces need modern equipment, new combat planes for Air Force, tanks for Pakistan Army, and new frigates for Pakistan Army and new frigates for Pakistan Navy. Besides it, the forces need more [word indistinct] different projects and to thwart any attack from across the border," said official sources, who added that the new proposals as firmed up in the meeting will be put before the next meeting of the Defence Committee of Cabinet (DCC).

Given the present scenario, the defence managers would ask the government to allocate around Rs140 to 150 billion for the defence expenditure. However, the final decision will be taken by the DCC to be chaired by the prime minister. She has already discussed the requirements of the armed forces in a meeting held in Islamabad

The defence managers also debated on the recent intermittent firing by Indian Border Security Forces along the Working Boundary, and the LOC [Line of Control] violations being committed by Indian forces.

The JCSC, said the sources, resolved that Indian bid to construct high-rise fences on Working Boundary for changing its status will not be tolerated.

"Such happenings and Indian bid to construct 30 feet high fencing along 200 kilometers-long working boundary should be brought into the notice of international organisations and the friendly countries," they [word indistinct]

The defence managers also discussed the overall interaction and strategic coordination between the three forces, while discussing the Afghan and Kashmir problems.

For the brief period of time, they had also discussed the situation arising out of the CIA-sponsored stories appeared in the American press on the alleged nuclear material transfers from China to Pakistan.

The meeting, according to official sources, discussed the forthcoming official level Pak-US dialogue which will take place in Washington from 2d April. Pakistani delegation headed by Secretary Defence Production Mazhar Rafi and other senior officials will hold talks with American officials at the forum of Programme Review Management (PRM).

The JCSC also took up host of professional matters and the state of preparedness.

Pakistan: President Discusses Kashmir, U.S.'Umbrella'

BK1403103396 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 14 Mar 96 pp 1, 9

[Report by Lahore correspondent: "Leghari Rules Out Putting Valley Under UN, U.S. Umbrella"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari has called upon the government and the opposition to sit together and sort out national issues including Kashmir on which they have unanimity.

The president was speaking at the certificate distribution of Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology (FAST) computer institute here on Wednesday.

He said, "I have been urging them privately and now I ask them publicly to sit together immediately as their unanimity on the issue should also be manifested in their actions," he said.

There is no difference of opinion on important national issues like the nuclear, Afghan and Kashmir policies, he said adding that he had asked the government and the opposition to sit together in the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir and take a unanimous decision on the issue to further the cause of Kashmiris.

President Leghari said Pakistan would not accept any proposal like freezing of Kashmir issue, giving its trusteeship or putting it under the UN or USA umbrella for a certain period.

"Our intellectuals have every right to think and speak out their mind on the Kashmir issue," he said and requested them to also consider the consistent principle stand of Pakistan on the issue.

Leghari said Dr Mahbubul Haq had during his visit to India suggested that Pakistan and India should freeze Kashmir issue for at least 15 years for sake of development of these countries. He said, he would not name those people as traitors or anti-state elements who spoke against the principle stand of Pakistan as to him they were the country's intellectuals.

He stressed that Kashmir issue be taken in wider context and opinion of Kashmiris be respected while taking any decision. He said plebiscite was a right given to Kashmiris by UN through a resolution.

About the third option, the president said it was being extensively discussed for the last couple of decade but for both India and Pakistan, it was irrelevant as Kashmiris had to decide which country they prefer.

Leghari said after publishing of secret papers people had been able to understand the mischief of colonial rulers especially the role played by Lord Mountbatten at the time of India and Pakistan's division.

He said, war in Afghanistan and disintegration of USSR had given new strength to Kashmiris and now they were struggling more vigorously against Indian Army. Even the American CIA cannot launch and sustain such a massive movement any where in the world except the uprising from within a society, he said.

Leghari said he respected Dr Haq's opinion as it was for the betterment of humanity but Kashmiris should be supported as they are suffering brutalities for independence.

Earlier, in his written speech the president said, Pakistan needed to enter the computer age. "The world of tomorrow belongs to those nations which invest in education and train their people in emerging technologies," he said.

"The industrialising tigers of East Asia have demonstrated in the last 30 years how some nations can leapfrog several decades of development by investing in their human capital. We can learn the same lesson from nations as diverse as Japan, China and Malaysia which have used investment in education and technology as the main instrument for their phenomenal growth," he added.

Leghari stressed that the world information technology market was a US$300 billion and was growing at a staggering 30-40 per cent per annum on the average. "This market growth rate outpaces any traditional market sector as textile whose annual growth rate is about one per cent," he said.

He said global trend was now to create, increase and protect intellectual capital assets as opposed to traditional assets such as brick and mortar and the paradigms of traditional business had been completely challenged by this fast emerging technology.

"Unfortunately, as of now, we have practically no share of this world market. Our capacity of producing software is painfully limited and number of computer science graduates produced every year is pathetically low. In comparison, our neighbouring countries have progressed in leaps and bounds and pose an immense challenge to Pakistan in terms of worldwide competition in software business," he said.

He said Pakistan's software initiative was one of our top most priorities today. "Our mission is to make Pakistan a global player in field of software and related services," he said.

Concluding, he quoted an eminent scientist who said "A school boy of today with a micro-computer at his disposal has more computing power than that possessed by the entire NASA team when they put the first man on moon in 1969."

The ceremony was also attended by Governor Punjab Lt Gen (retd) [Lieutenant General (retired)] Raja Saroop Khan, Senior Punjab Minister Malik Mushtaq Awan, Vice Chancellor Punjab University and others. The president also gave away awards and certificates to graduates of session 1990-93 and 1991-94.

Earlier, Dr Mahbub ul-Haq, president of FAST, and Dr M Ayub Alvi, director of the institute addressed the convocation ceremony.

Pakistan: Repair Work on Afghan Chaman-Torghundi Road To Proceed

BK1403095096 Islamabad THE NEWS in English 14 Mar 96 p 12

[Article by Mariana Baabar: "Pakistan Not To Abandon Chaman-Torghundi Road"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — The Foreign Office spokesman said Wednesday that Pakistan will go ahead with its plan to repair the Chaman-Torghundi road as it was an important step towards rehabilitation of war-torn Afghanistan.

The spokesman was reacting over Afghan Embassy's protest against Pakistan's plan to repair the road inside Afghanistan.

The spokesman was reacting over Afghan Embassy's protest against Pakistan's plan to repair the road inside Afghanistan. The embassy in a protest note handed over to the Foreign Office Wednesday said that Pakistan should abandon the plan to repair and upgrade work on the road. The diplomatic protest was made after president Borhanoddin Rabbani returned from a high profile state visit of Tehran.

The official protest was lodged after the Rabbani regime has protested and threatened indirectly against the road repair plan.

The Foreign Office told THE NEWS that, "Pakistan in line with its stated policy of helping the Afghan brethren will continue to do whatever it can within its limited resources to contribute to the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Afghanistan. It cannot, in deference to a junta which does not represent the Afghan people, ignore the well-being and prosperity of more than 80 percent population of a brotherly Muslim country which stand in urgent need of international support and assistance to rebuild their war-torn country. Pakistan will also continue to urge the international community to generously contribute to the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Afghanistan".

The spokesman added that the Kabul regime's objection to the development of infrastructure in areas not controlled by them amply reflect their hostility towards the people of Afghanistan who do not agree to the perpetuation of minority rule in Afghanistan.

"We have also noted that a number of Afghan groups have welcomed the assistance Pakistan is providing for the reconstruction and rehabilitation, the resources for which would be provided directly to the Afghan people, who will implement the projects on their own."

Afghan sources supporting President Rabbani giving the reason why Kabul was opposing such projects told THE NEWS "We would like that other areas should also receive the same treatment as is being given to the Taleban". This is similar to the requests which have come from other Afghan groups who oppose President Rabbani.

Islamabad also feels that "It is strange that the Kabul regime after its debacle in Western Afghanistan is objecting to this arrangement which will facilitate the movement of people and promote trade relations between these countries. This would also be a step forward in the direction of improvement of infrastructure in Afghanistan which has hindered the growth of trade and industry since the inception of hostilities among the warring groups".

A high level delegation will soon travel from Islamabad to Turkmenistan to inaugurate the repair work of the 800 km road. Later, another delegation which will include ambassadors stationed in Islamabad will also visit the area.

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